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By Capt. Charles A. J. Farrar.

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IN THE*

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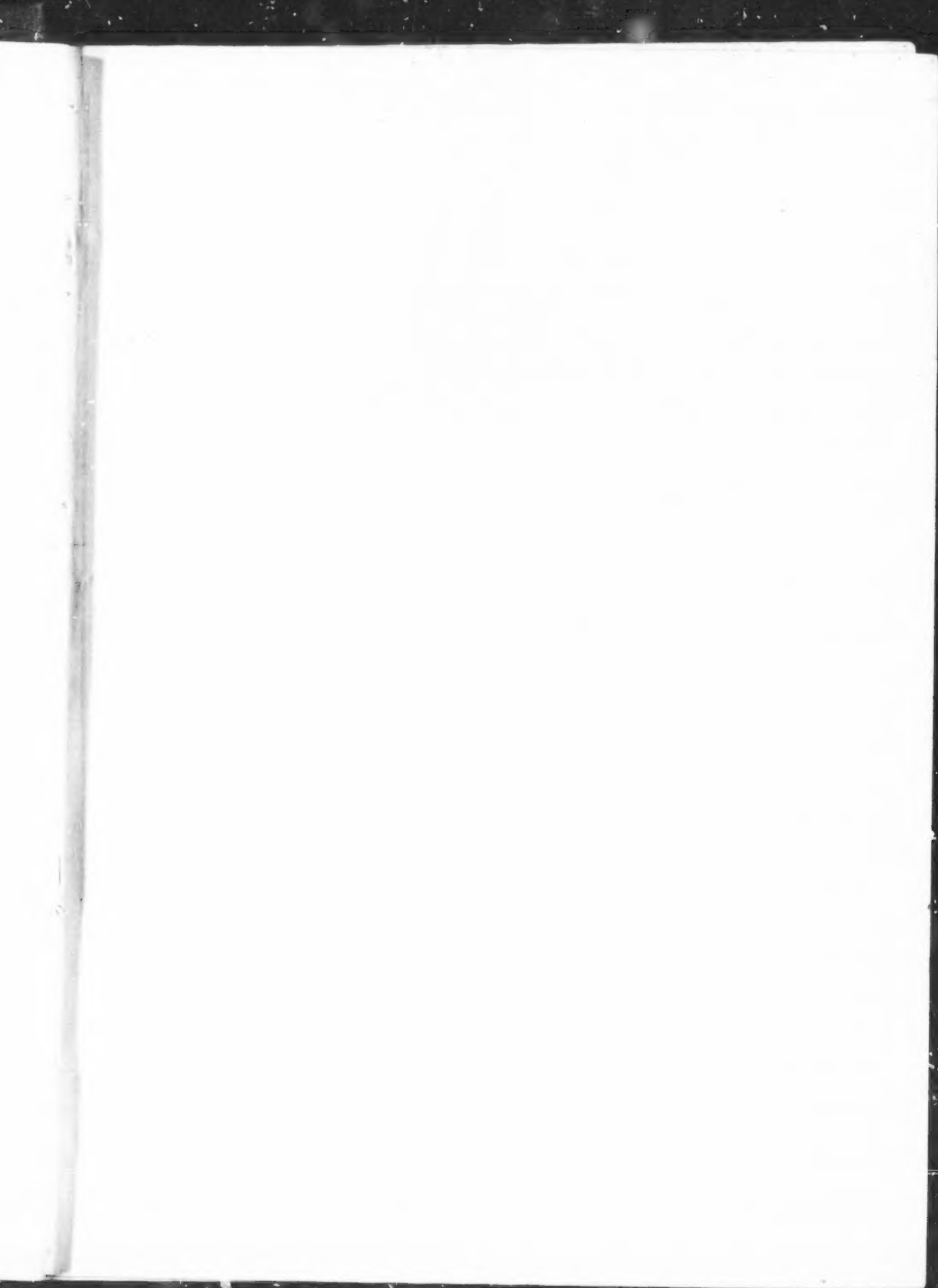
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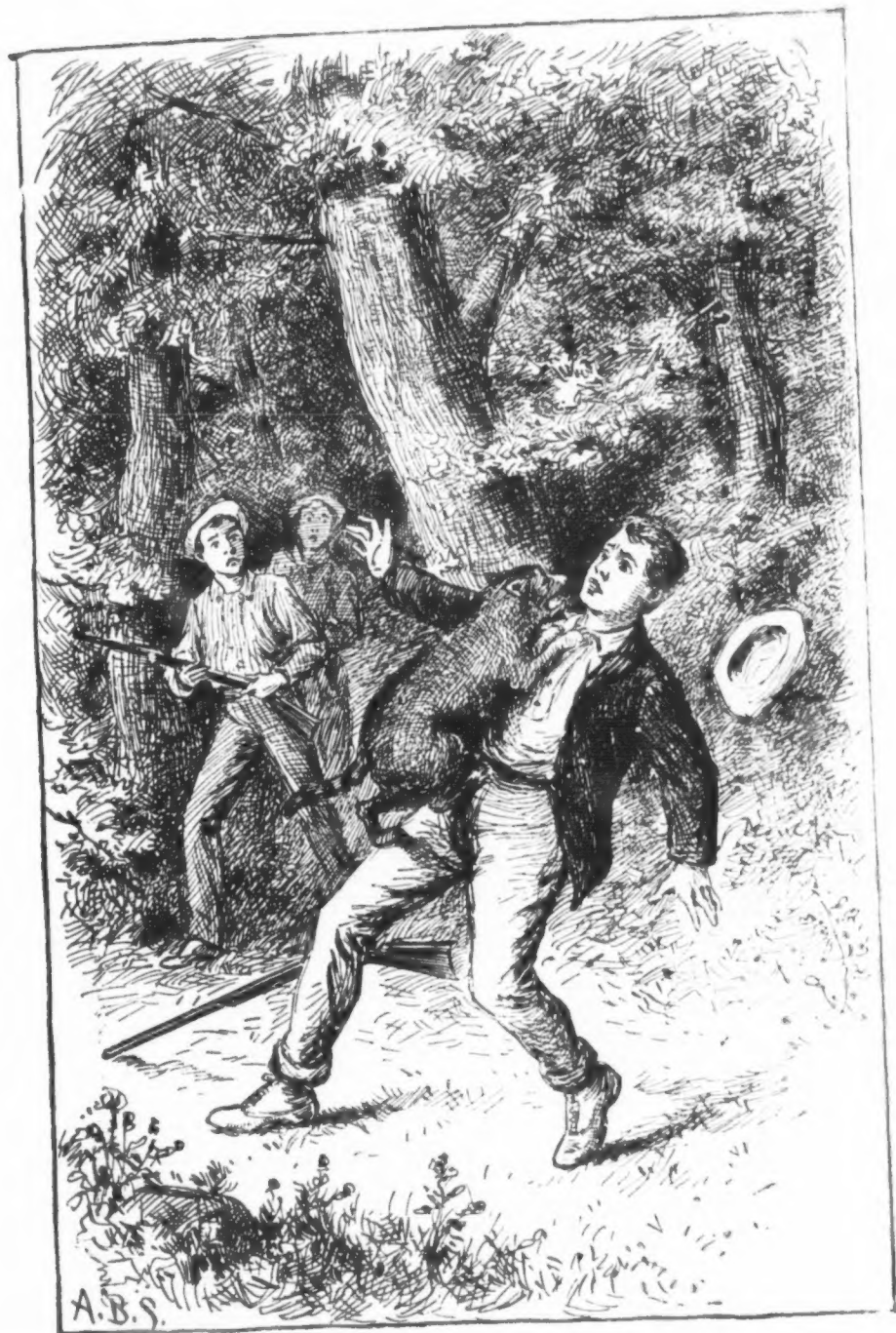
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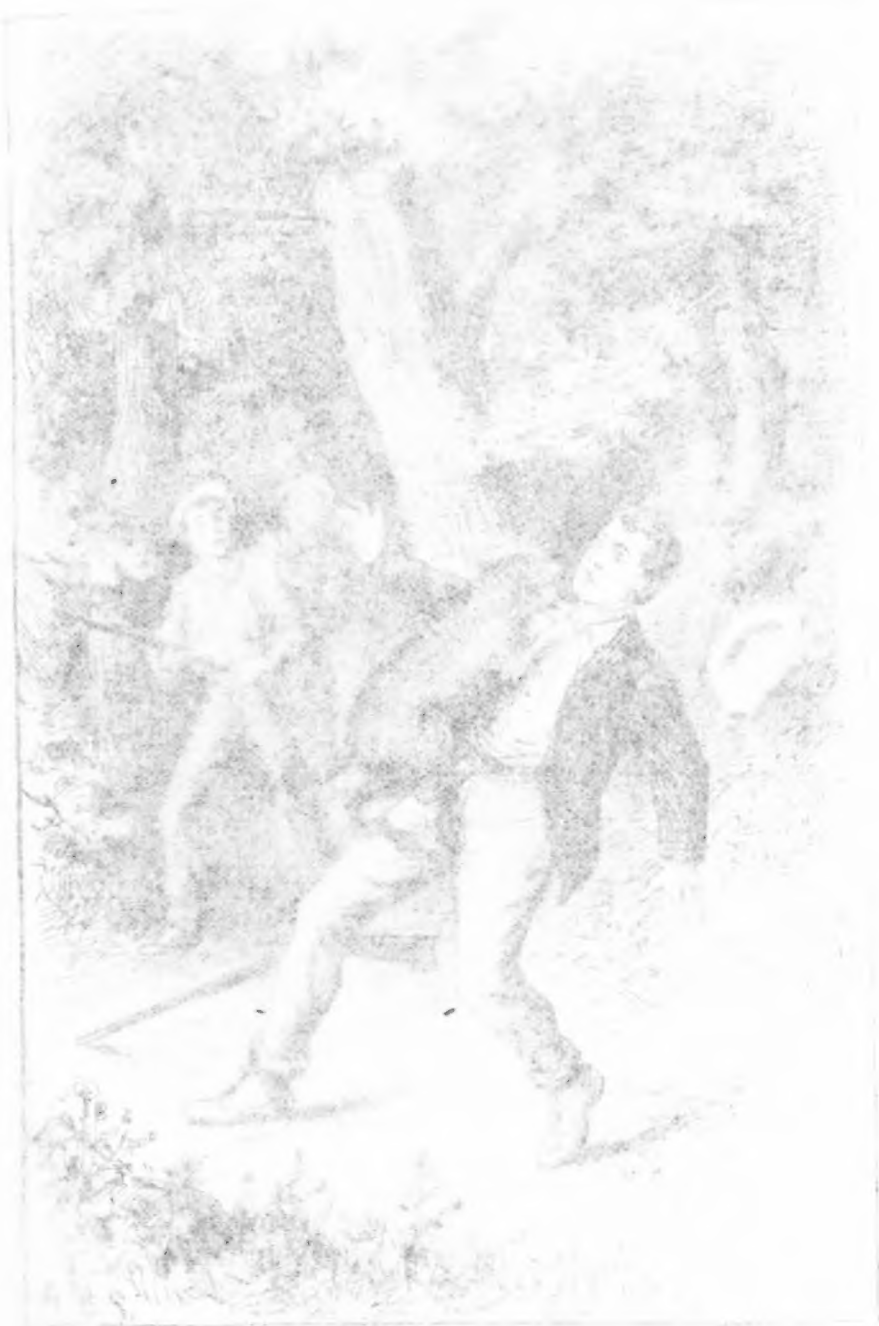
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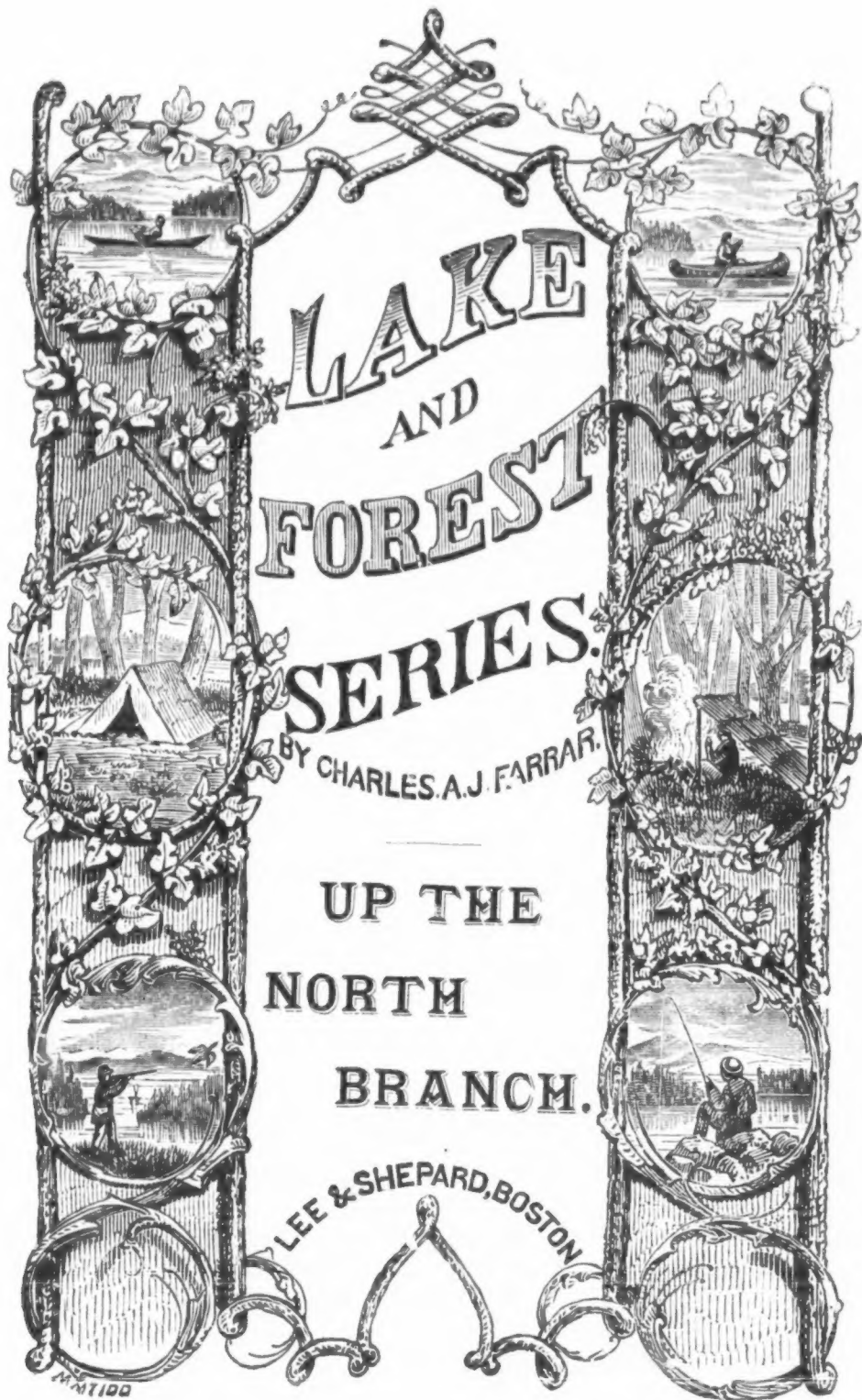
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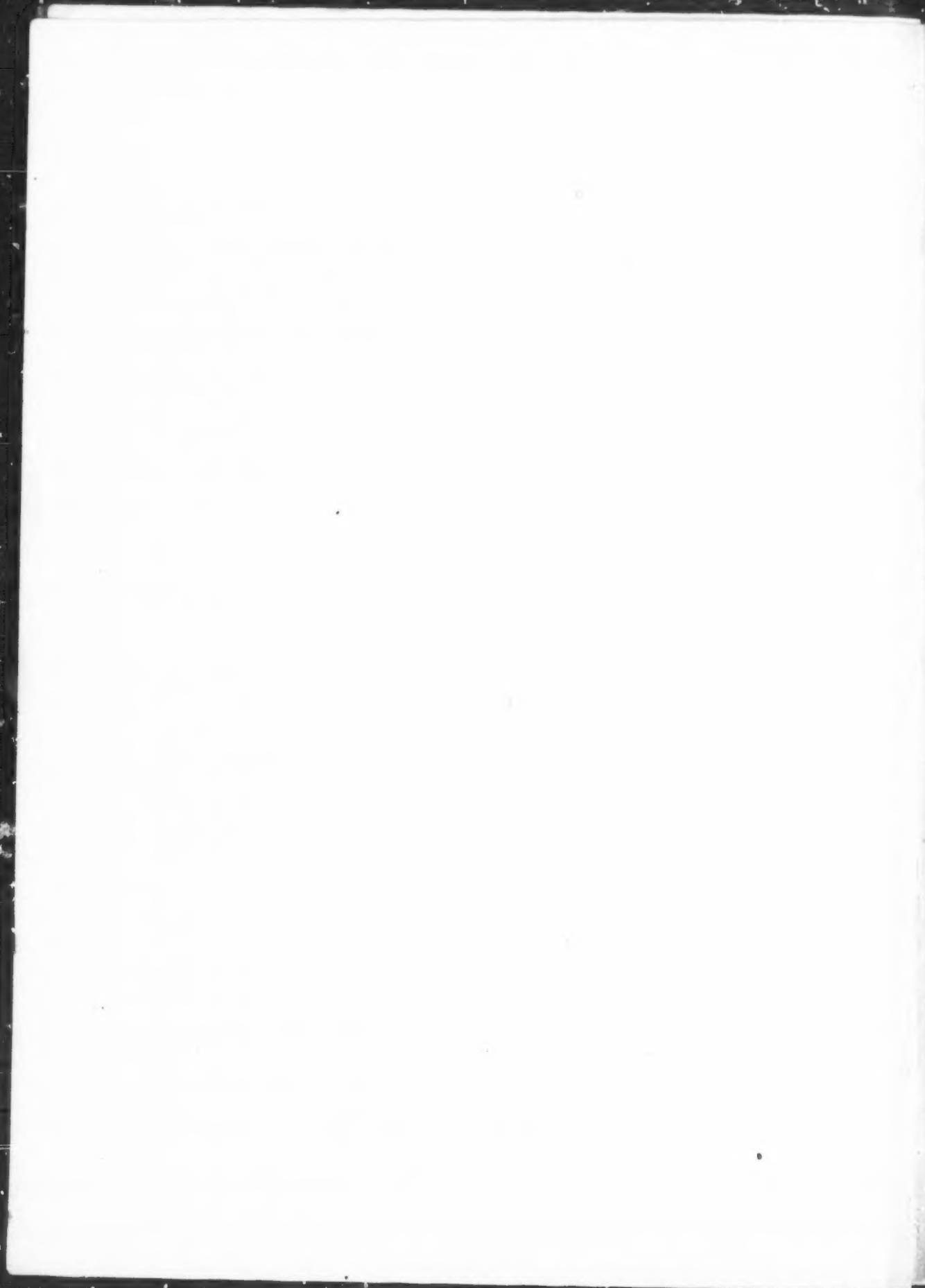
UP THE
NORTH
BRANCH.

LEE & SHEPARD, BOSTON.



FIGHT WITH A NATIVE. Page 100





LAKE AND FOREST SERIES

UP THE NORTH BRANCH

OR

A SUMMER'S OUTING

BEING

THE RECORD OF A CAMPING-OUT TRIP UP THE NORTH
BRANCH OF THE PENOBSCOT AND DOWN THE
ST. JOHN RIVER, THROUGH THE WILDS
OF MAINE AND NEW BRUNSWICK,
BY MEMBERS OF THE "LAKE AND FOREST CLUB"

BY

CAPT. CHARLES A. J. FARRAR

AUTHOR OF "EASTWARD HO!" "WILD WOODS LIFE," "DOWN THE
WEST BRANCH," "MOOSEHEAD LAKE AND THE NORTH MAINE
WILDERNESS," "THE ANDROSCOGGIN LAKES,"
ETC., ETC.

ILLUSTRATED

BOSTON 1889

LEE AND SHEPARD PUBLISHERS

10 MILK STREET NEXT "THE OLD SOUTH MEETING HOUSE"

NEW YORK CHARLES T. DILLINGHAM

718 AND 720 BROADWAY

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UP THE NORTH BRANCH.

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JAN 24 1974

To My Wife

ROSE AUSTIN FARRAR

WHOSE FAITH AND INTEREST IN MY SUCCESS HAVE ENCOURAGED
ME TO PERSEVERE AGAINST MANY DIFFICULTIES
IN LITERARY WORK

THIS VOLUME

IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED.



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PREFACE.

IN this volume, the fourth of the series, the members of the "Lake and Forest Club" travel through the wilds of Maine and of New Brunswick for more than a thousand miles. Several new experiences of a character to try the nerves of the young fellows composing the party, are met with on this trip; but the latter are enabled successfully to cope with the unexpected strain, and live to see the final end of their enemies who figure in "Down the West Branch."

This volume carries the Club and the reader, not to "greener fields," but to "pastures new," introducing them to a partially unexplored and out little known section of the New England and the Canadian Wildernesses, struggling through which, the most of the time without a guide, they frequently found themselves in dilemmas from which they were only extricated by a plucky determination to conquer all difficulties.

This book, like the others of the series, treats of forest life, and quite an amount of information

of practical use to amateurs is interwoven into the narrative which runs through the volume, making it, the author hopes, not only interesting, but instructive.

The marked favor which greeted the previous volumes of the series will be extended, it is believed confidently, to this latest production of the author; and as he has endeavored to eliminate from its pages anything which might be prejudicial to the best taste and the morals of young readers, he therefore trusts that discriminating parents will welcome "Up the North Branch" to their family libraries. Many "old boys" have expressed their liking for the author's literary efforts in as strong terms as those of the young, who have given to his works their appreciative recognition.

C. A. J. FARRAR.

ROCKVIEW, JAMAICA PLAIN, MASS.,
June, 1888.

UP THE NORTH BRANCH;

OR

A SUMMER'S OUTING.

CHAPTER I.

BEHIND THE IRON HORSE.

SEATED in a parlor car which was rapidly being whirled eastward, on the 5th of July, 1880, were a party of nine young gentlemen, who seemed to be having a most enjoyable time, and whom many of the readers of the Lake and Forest Series will recognize as old friends. It may readily be inferred that this party were some of the members of the Lake and Forest Club, starting out on their "fourth pilgrimage to Maine," as Claude Emerson expressed it.

To the great gratification of the party, two of the original members, by a happy combination of circumstances, had been enabled to participate in the present tour, and the readers of "Eastward Ho!" will easily remember William Foster and George Robbins, the first having come from California, and the latter from Florida, to join in the "Summer's Outing."

Just now the young gentlemen were indulging in pleasant reminiscences of their other trips, and peal

upon peal of laughter rolled through the car as incident after incident was related, each setting forth some ludicrous happening that had befallen one or another of the friendly group.

Although the Lake and Forest Club had grown and prospered as well as its best friends could wish, Claude Emerson, the projector, had only been able to get together a party of nine, two of whom, Foster and Robbins, were honorary members, and David Wood a new member; while among the old members were Charles Wingate, Andrew St. Clair, Frank Maynard, Thomas Le Roy, and Robert Drake, who first figures in the series in "Down the West Branch."

Many other members of the club would have been delighted to be with the party, but the length of time planned for the excursion was more than they could spare. Philip De Ruyter, of Brooklyn, N. Y., who had met some of the members of the club on their first trip, and who had accompanied them on their second and third tours, was abroad with his family, who were to spend the summer in Europe.

Phil had written Claude that he would have preferred to have accompanied his friends on their fourth trip to the Maine woods, but that his father had insisted upon his joining the family in their foreign tour. He expressed deep regret at not being able to meet Foster and Robbins, and wished to be kindly remembered to them. Both of the honorary members of the club were also disappointed in not meeting Phil, as they had surely expected he would be one of the party.

Three new boats, longer by some two feet than the

old ones, had been bought for the present excursion, and had been named, respectively, the *Petrel*, the *Swallow*, and the *Daisy*, and these, with the baggage of the young fellows, took up such a space in the baggage car that the head "sinasher" had to be liberally "tipped" in order to have the boats accompany the party.

"It strikes me, the flies will be rather plenty," remarked Robbins, "and I wouldn't wonder if we had a lively time during the next four weeks."

"Of course we shall find a few," returned Claude, with a laugh and a wink at Foster. "But we are well prepared for them this trip, having invested in a liberal quantity of every kind of 'fly medicine' that is on the market."

"Do you remember the night the midges went for us on our first trip to the lakes, and how they made Robbins dance?" queried Foster, laughing heartily at the remembrance.

"I do," said Wingate, before Claude could answer, "and, if I remember rightly, all of us did a little dancing that night — eh, George?" giving Robbins, who sat near him, a slap on the thigh.

"I should say so. I don't think I complained any worse than the rest of you."

Foster's question started a train of thought in the minds of those who had been on the first trip, and incident after incident was related by one and another, which seemed to keep the whole party in a jolly mood, until the train rolled into the depot at Portsmouth.

"Ten minutes for refreshments," sang out the

colored porter, as he stepped into the car, and nodded to the occupants.

"That's me," declared Wingate, jumping up. "I had an early breakfast this morning, and I feel as if I could eat a whole moose."

"You'll have a chance to try some day," said Le Roy, "after we strike the North Branch," and he arose with the others.

"Adams was the champion feeder," remarked Claude, as they left the car: "he could eat more grub for his size than any fellow I ever knew."

"Then it's a good thing he is not with us," answered Maynard, laughing, "for we may find provisions pretty scarce before we get to the end of this trip."

"If worse comes to worse, we can live on mosquito soup," suggested St. Clair.

"The greatest objection I should make to that, if I was starving," replied Claude, "would be that it would take too many for a meal."

"Not if they were as large as they are in Jersey," laughed Wood. "I was down there once, at some beach, I forgot the name of it now, and the mosquitoes were simply monsters. Many of them were as large as a horse."

"I'm something of a liar myself," cried Drake, as the party went smiling into the lunch room.

The ten minutes seemed quickly over to our young friends, and they returned to the car just as the train began to move out of the depot.

Between Portsmouth and Kittery the train crosses

the Piscataqua River, on a bridge, and adjoining it on the north side is another bridge for public travel, the two being practically one structure. When the train reached the middle of the bridge, it overtook a team, containing a man and woman, that was going in the same direction, and the horse became frightened and ran away. Just beyond the end of the bridge, the team collided with a yoke of oxen hauling a load of manure, and the glimpse the boys had of the collision, as they shot past it, showed the oxen down, and the horse on top of them, and the man and the woman flying through the air in two different directions, and the driver of the oxen running for dear life.

"Well, that was quite a circus," remarked Wingate, when the party had resumed their seats.

"Yes," answered Claude. "I hope those people in the wagon escaped injury."

"So do I," said Wingate, "but I'll risk the fellow that drove the oxen: he was making himself scarce with a celerity that did credit to his understanding."

"Say that again, Charlie," quizzed Maynard, "and put hyphens between the words; I can't swallow it all at one mouthful."

The other members of the party laughed.

"Well, he ran like the old scratch, then. Does that suit you any better?"

"More to the point, if not so elegant," asserted Frank.

"Do you suppose the railroad company will have to pay the damages?" queried Drake, as if inviting an argument.

"Of course they will," returned Claude. "Railroads are bled worse than any other corporations in the country. If a horse has a fit and dies in a field in sight of a railroad, an intelligent jury awards damages to his owner. If a cow breaks her leg while crossing a railroad track, that farmer has sold his beef in a high market. If a sawmill burns down anywhere inside of a mile from a railroad track, the owner is always able to prove that the fire caught from the sparks of a locomotive."

"Anything more?" questioned Drake, with a laugh, while Claude took a long breath.

"Yes, there is. If the wife of a section man living in a shanty by the railroad has twins, the company is burdened for life with the support of the extra child."

One long, loud shout went up at this remark, and the laugh was joined in by the train conductor, who had entered the car just in time to catch Claude's closing remark.

"You would make a good corporation counsel, young man," remarked the conductor, as he began punching their tickets.

"Do we get to Portland the same time the train does?" asked Foster, as he winked at his friends.

"That depends upon whether you stick to the train," replied the man with the ticket punch.

"Has you there, Bill," chuckled St. Clair.

"Might know he would," put in Maynard. "You never can get ahead of a conductor, Foster."

"Why so?"

"Because he travels as fast as you do," and the conductor joined in the laugh.

"Do you go beyond Portland, conductor?" inquired Claude.

"No. You have another man from Portland to Bangor. How far are you going?"

"To Skehowgan by rail."

"Skowhegan, you mean," laughed the collector of tickets.

"Yes, that's the fellow," returned Claude. "And from there we go to the Forks and Moose River by stage, and then across to Moosehead Lake, and 'way beyond there. I don't think we know just where we are going, but we shall bring up somewhere, for we are off for a 'Summer's Outing.'"

"I hope you will enjoy yourselves, and you seem capable of doing it," replied the conductor, as he left them, and pulled the bell cord for the engineer to slow down at an approaching station.

The party had chartered the car to carry them through to Skowhegan, and while they were waiting for the Maine Central train the porter set the tables, and they had their dinner from the buffet.

Beyond Portland, the country was all new to them, and they enjoyed the ride to Waterville, via Brunswick and the Kennebec towns, very much, with the exception of half an hour's wait, which they were compelled to take, much against their will, between Vassalboro and Winslow. About midway between these two places the train suddenly stopped.

"What's the matter now, I wonder!" exclaimed Wood, jumping to his feet.

“Suppose we investigate and find out,” added Claude, starting for the rear door, followed by his friends.

Leaving the car, they found flame and smoke pouring out from one of the wheels of the Pullman behind them, and two or three train hands, with various articles used on such occasions, busy about the wheel. An interested crowd of spectators, as usual, soon collected, and were not backward in proffering advice.

“Looks very much like a hot box,” said Claude, as his party reached the spot where the men were at work.

“A bad one, too,” returned Wingate. “We shall have quite a wait here.”

Water was brought from the tender, and the box was cooled off sufficiently for the men to slide off the cover, and get in some oil, soap, and waste, and after about thirty minutes’ detention the engineer announced that they might start.

The conductor shouted “all aboard,” and, as soon as the last passenger was safely on the train, the engineer opened the throttle. ‘ve, and the iron horse began his journey once more. Waterville was reached without other unusual delay; and here the car in which the young gentlemen were travelling was detached from its fellows, and shifted to the Skowhegan train.

In fifteen minutes they were under way again, on the branch road, which followed the Kennebec quite closely the entire distance, crossing it just before entering the village. The engine on the branch was not as heavy as those used on the main line, and, having the extra weight of the Pullman to haul, had not been able to

keep up to time and the train drew up beside the little depot half an hour late.

"What hotel do we go to, Claude?" queried Robbins, as the party began gathering up their belongings, assisted very zealously by the porter, who could size up a crowd for what they were worth to him, in the way of tips, as quickly as any of his ilk.

"The Turner House, and probably the proprietor will be outside, as I wrote him to meet us."

When the young fellows stepped outside the cars, they found a "sidewalk committee" all ready to receive them, and, by the way they were stared at, they concluded that fishing parties who travelled in special Pullman cars were rather a novelty to the inquisitive burghers of Skowhegan.

"Is Mr. Heselton here?" called Claude, as he looked about him, not at all relishing the scrutiny he was undergoing.

"That is my name," replied a bright-looking young man, stepping forward.

"You are the proprietor of the Turner House?"

"Yes, sir."

"I wrote you about rooms. Did you get my letter!"

"Yes, sir, and have saved you five good rooms. Will you ride or walk to the house?"

"Walk if it is not too far, after I see our boats and baggage unloaded."

"The house isn't five minutes' walk from here. If you will give me your checks, I will have my man load up your baggage."

"Here they are," returned Claude, who had collected

them all before leaving the car. "What have you to haul the boats in?"

"Nothing here. I will come over for them after we take the baggage to the house."

"That will do, but they must not stay on this platform to-night."

"Certainly not, sir. I will have them at the house in an hour. If they were left here, every boy in town would be in them before morning."

"That is what I supposed," returned Claude, dryly.

When the boats had been taken from the cars, the owners examined them carefully and found, much to their satisfaction, that they had come through in good shape. Satisfied of this, they walked over to the hotel, and went to their rooms for a wash before supper.

The evening was passed in conversation with the driver with whom they were to ride the next day, in gaining some idea of the road to the Forks; and they found him pleasant and loquacious, and capable of spinning some pretty tough yarns.

CHAPTER II.

EN ROUTE FOR MOOSE RIVER.

THE party had a good night's rest, and were up bright and early Tuesday morning; after breakfast, Wingate, who was treasurer for the trip, paid the bill, and the young fellows went out to superintend the loading of their baggage, so that nothing should be left behind.

The party had one stage entirely to themselves, and they were obliged to hire another team to transport their boats and stores; and Claude made arrangements with Mr. Heselton to take them the entire distance to Moose River Bridge, the journey occupying the better part of two days.

At last everything was ready, and at half past seven the stage and team left the hotel, amid the cheers of the boys, which were reëchoed by the bystanders. It was a lovely morning, and everybody was in fine spirits.

The stage soon left the team with the boats and stores far behind, and the driver said they would not see it again that day, unless it might possibly reach Bingham, where a stop was made for dinner, before the party left there.

"What time do we reach the Forks Hotel?" inquired Drake.

"About five o'clock," returned the driver.

"Is there much of a village at the Forks, driver?" queried Wood.

"Scarcely any. It is a sort of headquarters for lumbering operations."

As the horses cleared the village they began the ascent of a hill which stretched away for three miles beyond them, and during this climb the party, looking back occasionally, obtained some fine views of the receding village.

As they reached the top of the hill, the driver pointed out Madison Pond to them, a pretty sheet of water, which lay off to the right, and was distant four miles from Skowhegan village.

"How large is that pond, driver?" inquired Maynard.

"It covers about two thousand acres."

"Any fish in it?" queried Le Roy.

"Yes, there are several kinds of trout, and Hayden, that's his house we are now passing, has row and sail boats to let. There's lots of people come out here from the village in summer. It's just a nice drive out here and back."

"Are we out of Skowhegan yet?" inquired Robbins.

"Yes, we passed the line some ways back. We're in the town of Madison now. and the next one we come to is Solon."

"What is that high hill ahead, driver?" asked St. Clair.

"Robbins Hill, and we have a nice view from it. You can look all over the country from the top of that elevation."

"Why, Robbins, your fame must have reached down this way," said Maynard, with a laugh, "or they never would have named that hill for you."

"A prophet is not without honor except in his own country," quoted Robbins, with a wise look.

"Have you the cheek to insinuate that you have any claims to prophecy?" inquired Le Roy.

"Certainly. And I'll give you proof of it now. It is going to be a mighty hot day," and Robbins smiled as if he had said a good thing.

"Any fool knows that."

"That is the reason you know it, then," retorted Robbins, with a laugh, in which all but Le Roy joined.

On the top of Robbins Hill the driver pulled up his horses a few moments, and gave the young gentlemen a chance to enjoy the sightly panorama around them, and they were loud in its praise. Mountain after mountain swept up around them in every direction, and Moxie Mountain, to the northward, was especially prominent.

Five miles farther on, the stage entered the village of Solon, and the party once more caught sight of the Kennebec, which they had not seen since leaving Skowhegan, as the river had made a long bend to the west, while the road over which they had travelled ran almost due north.

The driver had an errand to do at the Carratunk House, the ore hotel of the village, and, while the stage stopped, the boys visited a store close by, and made a purchase of peanuts and candy, as Claude said, "to spoil their appetite for dinner."

When they had started again, the driver informed them that Solon was fifteen miles from Skowhegan, and that Carratunk Falls, half a mile distant from the hotel they had just left, was well worth seeing.

"We'll take your word for it," said Drake, "and I suppose there is good fishing about here too?"

"Splendid," replied the driver. "There are lots of people come here every year, and stop for the trout fishing."

"How far from here to Bingham?" queried Wood. "Candy and peanuts may do very well for a lunch, but I begin to feel as if I would like to get outside of a good dinner."

"Only eight miles," returned the knight of the ribbons, "and it is good roading all the way."

"Is the river in sight from here to Bingham?" questioned Robbins of the driver.

"Yes, all the way from here to the Forks. We keep to the right of it, and sometimes it is so near that you could jump out of the stage into it."

"That would not be a bad idea this hot day."

The next eight miles lay through a good farming country, presenting some pretty landscape pictures, which the young gentlemen, with their artistic perception, were not slow to appreciate.

At half past twelve they entered the village, and a few moments later the driver pulled up his horses at the hotel, which was named the Stage House, and was kept at that time by a Mr. Savage.

"Do you suppose the landlord is an 'untutored savage'?" queried Wingate of Claude, as they descended from the coach.

"Tell you better after I sample his dinner," returned his friend, with a laugh.

The party found the dinner very good, and were not slow in disposing of their part of it, and, after appeasing their hunger, they strolled about near the hotel for a few moments, but the sun was so hot it soon drove them within doors.

"I would like to know how hot it is," remarked Claude, as the boys sat down in the office. "I should think it was about five hundred in the shade."

Wingate, who had been hunting around for a thermometer, and had found one, now entered and announced that it was ninety-five in the shade.

"You see my prophecy was correct," remarked Robins, with a chuckle.

"Oh, let up on the weather," said Foster.

"I wish it would let up on us," added St. Clair.

At the expiration of an hour and a quarter, the stage appeared at the door, and the young gentlemen resumed their seats. The landlord bade them "good-bye," and shouted "good luck" to them as they were whirled rapidly northward.

Beyond Bingham, the boys missed the telegraph poles which had dotted the roadside at regular intervals from Skowhegan, and the driver informed them that they were now beyond the reach of that important connection.

Riding out from Bingham, they found the hills rapidly increasing in height, and the valley growing narrower. A chain of mountains extends from the Forks down to Bingham, on each side of the river, enclosing it amid rocky walls, which sometimes almost completely over-

whelm it. In many places there is barely room for the road and the river between the mountains, but this is typical of most mountain localities in New England.

As they pursued the river northward, they noticed that it grew more and more crooked, but the road followed all its sinuosities with unswerving regularity. In several places the mountain swept down so sharply into the river that the roadbed had been literally dug out of its side, and a barricade of logs was built up from the riverside as a foundation.

The portions that had been dug out, the driver informed them, were called "dug-ways," and they occurred quite frequently, and at some points where the road made sharp curves. As the horses swung around one of these bends, sometimes at a gallop, the boys had rather an unpleasant feeling of excitement, for an accident in such a locality boded no good to the participants.

"Why do you go around these curves on the dug-ways at such break-neck speed?" inquired Wingate, after they had swung around one at a rate that caused them all to rise in their seats with a feeling of alarm.

"Oh, the faster you go round them the safer it is," returned the driver, as he sent out the long lash of his whip with a crack around the leader's ears.

"That is all nonsense," declared Claude. "On the other hand, it stands to reason that the slower you turn the curve the safer it is, and just be kind enough not to gallop around one of those places again. There is altogether too much exhilaration in it to suit me. 'Slow and sure' is a very good motto as applied to this case."

"All right!" returned the driver, who, like most of his kind, was willing to take some risk for the sake of showing off, "I will slow down when we come to the next one."

"We went through a bridge in a stage, a few years ago, while on one of our trips," continued Claude, "but I had rather take my chances in a place like that a dozen times, than go down this embankment. Why, it is twenty-five feet to the river in some places."

"How far d'ye fall when you went through the bridge?"

"Only five or six feet; but that was enough."

"There's some tote-teams ahead of us, and it's 'bout time we were overhauling them," said the driver, after quite a lull in the conversation. "They left Bingham this morning, and we ought to pass them before they reach the Forks."

"We are not interested in the tote-teams," remarked Wingate. "What do you call this mountain on the right of us, and what are those holes? It looks as if some one had been digging there."

"So there has. There was a party of greenhorns from New York down here in 1852, who dug for gold there. But they got so rich in three weeks that they didn't have to dig any more," and the driver chuckled.

"Well, there is certainly iron ore there, for I can see it," replied Maynard.

"Of course, you can," added the driver. "Some people say that mountain is full of minerals, but I don't take much stock in it."

Four miles farther on they passed Carney's Hotel, a resort for sportsmen and lumbermen, and the driver informed them that quite a lot of gold had been found in a small stream that ran near the house.

"Any fishing about here?" inquired St. Clair.

"Lots of it," returned the captain of the craft. "Pleasant Ridge Ponds and Carrying Place Ponds are only a few miles from here, and lots of sports visit them for fishing."

"Which do they get the most of, bites or fish?" queried Drake.

"Well, I should kinder say bites, in fly time."

"What else is there about here worth knowing?" asked Le Roy.

"Oh, considerable. You see that flat on the other side of the river," pointing to a level plateau. "Well, that's where Arnold's army camped during their march to Canada."

"Is that so?" put in Claude. "That was in the winter of 1775."

"We are near historic ground, then," remarked Foster.

"Yes, I suppose so," added the driver. "One of his men died while they was camped there, and was buried near the river, and there's a stone there now that marks the spot."

"I wish we had time to visit it," said Robbins.

"So do I," agreed Claude, "but we can't stop now."

"When they broke camp," continued the narrator, "they marched across country to the Carrying Place

Ponds, and from there to Dead River, where he camped again, and after a while went up the North Branch, through Chain Ponds, and then into Canada."

"His men suffered a great deal on that march," said Drake; "I have read all about it."

"We are going through Moscow now," said the driver, after quite a period of silence for him. "This is the last incorporated town this way, and that little village ahead is Carratunk."

"How far is it from there to the Forks?" queried Wood.

"Nine miles, and houses are few and far between the rest of the distance."

The country grew wilder as they travelled onwards. Towering pines rose from the mountain on the right, and to the left the river tumbled and roared on its long and wearisome journey to the sea. The road, hemmed in by mountain and river, seemed to fight for its very existence. The views from different turns of the highway were charming and picturesque, and sometimes approached the sublime. These last nine miles seemed the shortest part of the distance to them, so interested were they in the scenery.

As they drove up to the hotel they were surprised to see such a nice house so far back from any large settlement. But when the driver told them that Ex-Governor Coburn had built it the boys ceased to wonder, as they had heard of him as a very wealthy man. They found the rooms large and handsomely furnished, and the outlook from them very pleasant. The house stood on the bank of the East Branch (the main Kennebec),

Up the North Branch.

and in sight of the West Branch (Dead River), and the location was very attractive.

The two branches unite a short distance below the hotel, and, after supper, Claude and Foster went down the road a short distance, and Claude made a sketch of the place, that was very creditable. But the two friends found mosquitoes so plenty and voracious that they were glad to get back to the house as soon as possible, for they had taken no fly preparation with them.

While sitting in the office in the evening, the driver introduced them to several guides, who thought they scented a job; but, after talking with the boys awhile, they concluded that they would not get one, and in this they were right.

One of the guides, a very persistent fellow, when he found the young gentlemen would not hire anybody to go with them, tried his best to get them to stop at the hotel a week or two, and told them of Moxie Pond and Moxie Stream, and other places where they were sure of good fishing. He also told them they should go and see Moxie Falls, that were a hundred feet high, and very beautiful. But all of his seductive arguments were lost on the party, who were anxious to push on toward the North Branch; as Claude told him, "they had no time for side shows."

At half past seven Wednesday morning the boys bade adieu to the Forks Hotel and its hospitable landlord, and in a few moments the stage crossed the Kennebec by means of a covered wooden bridge, following the "old Canada road," as it is called, northward.

Dead River was in sight on their left for a mile, and

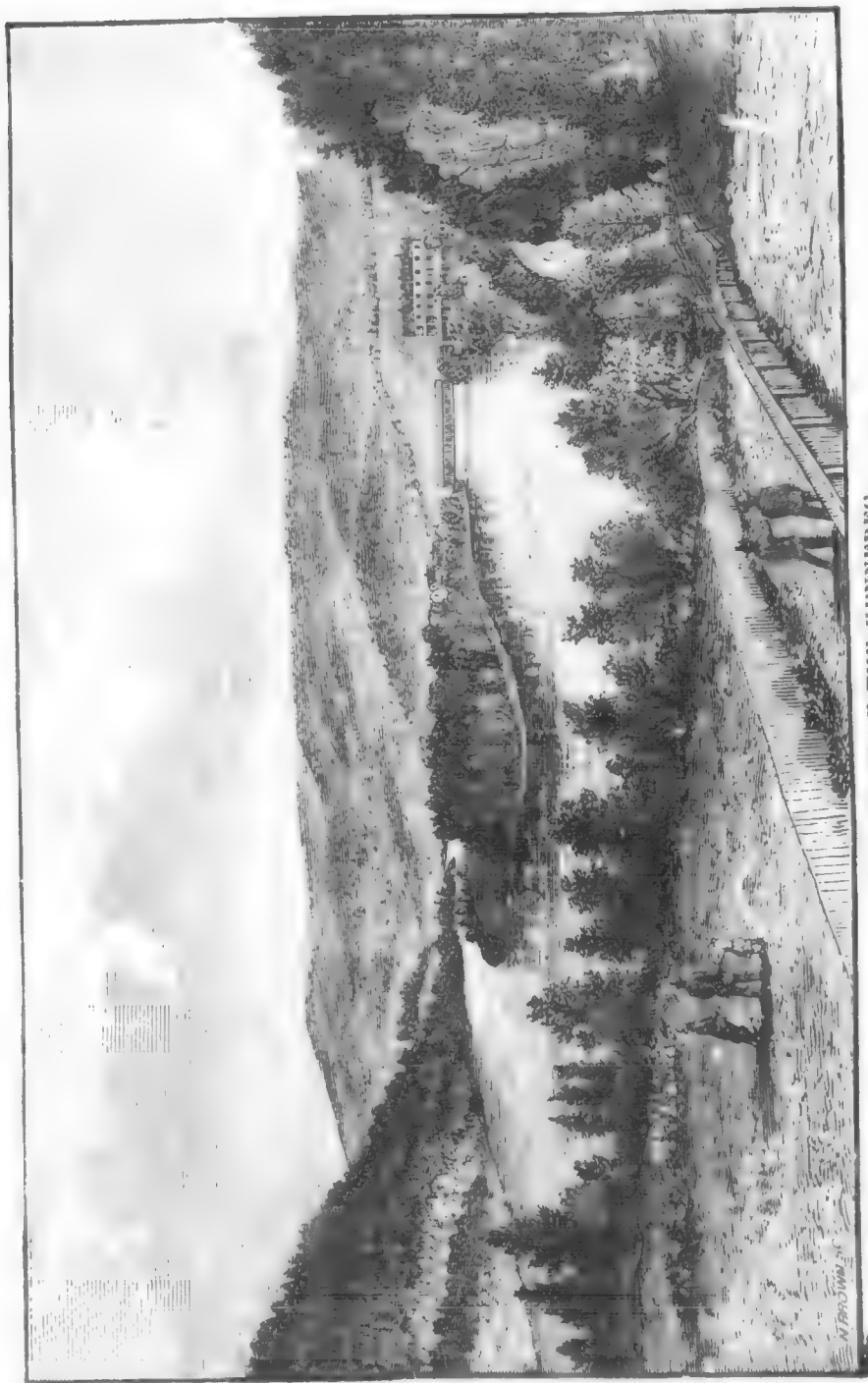
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THE FORKS OF THE KENNEBEC.

then the road made a sharp bend to the right, and they lost sight of the stream.

"We rise over eleven hundred feet in going the next ten miles," volunteered the driver, who, having finished his morning pipe, was now ready to talk.

"We shall be getting up in the world," suggested Maynard.

"This is a bad country for a farmer, I should think," remarked Foster. "The land is very rough and seems poor."

"All it's fit for is for lumbering," added the driver.

The ride through this heavily timbered country in the fresh morning air was delightful, and, as each of the party had taken from their baggage some kind of fly preparation, they got on with the flies and mosquitoes quite comfortably.

The forest was so dense that but little could be seen except for a few yards around them, but occasionally they caught a glimpse of lofty mountains beyond, whose appearance invited a nearer approach.

"What house is that?" inquired Wood of the driver, as they passed a small building that looked like a hotel.

"That is Smith's, and you had better take a good look at it, for you won't see another house for the next ten miles."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Maynard, "this is a wilderness indeed."

Yes, it is in somebody's deed, I suppose," remarked Wingate to his friend, with a wink and a smile.

"Now, don't begin that sort of thing, Charlie," protested Claude. "You'll make us tired."

"Then we shall be in the same condition that our wheels are in now," added St. Clair, looking as solemn as an owl.

"What do you mean, you Jack?" inquired Le Roy.

"Why, that our wheels are all tired, — I'll leave it to the driver if they are not."

"That's so; darned if they ain't," chuckled the conductor of the vehicle.

As they reached the top of Johnson Mountain, which they had been climbing for some time, they obtained a splendid view of Bald Mountain, towering high above them on the left. As the stage neared the limit of the woods, they passed a huge boulder on the right side of the road, that must have weighed many tons.

"What a tremendous great rock!" remarked Wood.

"Yes, and some fellow with his little hatchet has split it in halves," added Drake.

"There's quite a story about that rock," said the driver.

"Let's have it," urged St. Clair. "We wish to buy everything of that kind for either cash down or on the instalment plan; so fire away."

"The way I heard it was that several years ago a man in Canada stole five or six hundred dollars in gold, and come down into Maine with it. Being afraid of getting caught with the money about him, he hid it under that big rock, intending to come back some time and get it. But before he had a chance he was taken sick, and on his death-bed told the story of his theft,

and where he had hid the money, and there's been lots of fellers here a-digging for that gold, but I don't believe they ever found it."

"Nor I, either," said Claude.

Leaving the woods, they came in sight of a fine sheet of water, which the driver informed them was Parlin Pond, three miles long and a mile wide; and midway of this pond they came to a hotel, the Parlin Pond House, and here the driver hauled up his horses, telling the boys that this was the place at which to get dinner.

"All right," sang out St. Clair. "I am ready for dinner as soon as the dinner is ready for me."

"So say we all of us," sang Le Roy, as the young fellows jumped out of the wagon.

"This is a pretty place," said Claude, as they stopped a moment on the piazza before entering the house.

"Yes, the mountains around here are lovely," added Maynard, "but, great Cæsar's ghost! just see the flies and mosquitoes gather!"

"They know there is a fresh importation of city blood, and they mean to collect duties on it," said Robbins.

"What are the names of those two high mountains?" inquired Drake of the landlord, who now appeared and welcomed the boys.

"Oh, those are Bean Mountain and Hurricane Mountain, and there's a nice trout pond on top of old Hurricane. You ought to go up there fishing."

"Thank you. Not this day. Some other day. How near ready is dinner? I'm as hungry as the traditional wolf."

"It's all ready now. Would you like to wash?"

"Certainly." And Drake followed close at the landlord's heels, while the rest of the party, like a flock of sheep, fell into line.

After dinner, which was satisfactory to all concerned, the party took their seats for their last piece of staging, a distance of fifteen miles.

"What time do you think our boats and stores will reach Moose River, Claude?" queried Wood.

"I don't know. What do you say, driver?"

"I don't believe they'll be along before eight or nine o'clock. You can see yourself what a lot of hills a team has to climb."

"Then we shall have to stop at the hotel over night," said Maynard.

"Certainly," added Claude. "It will be much pleasanter to begin our water trip in the morning."

Four miles beyond Parlin Pond the stage halted on a lofty eminence in Jackmantown, known as Lookout Hill.

"What are you stopping here for?" inquired Robbins.

"Partly to rest the horses, and partly to let you take a look around. I call it a nice view from here."

"Yes, it is," acknowledged Claude. "As pretty a view as I have ever seen."

After a few moments' stop the driver started his horses again, and on they went, up hill and down, and, after several miles' ride, crossed a mountain, known as Owl's Head, nearly all the distance being through the woods.

"This country beats all the places I ever saw for hills," said Drake. "It is up and down all the time."

"Well, it's not so monotonous as a dead level," added Robbins.

After a while they began climbing another high hill, which the driver told them was the last one, and at the top of this they cleared the forest, and below them lay Moose River valley and the little village of the same name, which is in the plantation of Holden. The long range of mountains that divide Maine from Canada, some fifteen miles away, stretched like a wall along the horizon, shutting out what lay beyond.

It was three o'clock when the stage drew up at the little hotel just beyond the bridge that spans Moose River, and the driver told them that they were at the Colby House.

"My stars!" ejaculated Wingate, "is this the hotel? It is not any larger than a beach cottage."

"This is the house," reiterated the driver, who was now busy unloading the baggage. "I guess they can manage to take care of you some way."

After helping unload their things, they went inside and found the landlady, a woman being the proprietor, and asked her if she could accommodate them for the night.

"I will do the best I can for you, and, if three of you will sleep in one room, I guess I can manage it."

"We will all sleep in one room, for that matter," replied Claude, "if you can do no better for us."

"That will not be necessary, sir," returned the land-

lady, with a smile, and, telling them she would return soon, vanished from their presence.

After the driver had taken care of his horses, he came into the office and told the boys that they were in the custom house.

"Custom house? Nonsense!" replied Maynard.

"I'm not fooling," returned the driver, laughing. "We are only a few miles from the Canada line, and if they did not have an officer here there would be lots of smuggling done."

"Well, it's about the most unpretentious custom house that I ever saw. Uncle Sam does not put on much style in this country," and Claude stared around the little ten-by-twelve office, in a vain attempt to compare it with the interior of the Boston custom house.

"Do you know the way from here to Moosehead Lake?" inquired the driver.

"Certainly, as well as you do," replied Wingate.

The driver laughed, and said, "If you don't know it any better than I do, you don't know much, for I was never there in my life."

"Well, we have been to Moosehead," replied Claude, "but not this way. We went to Katahdin Iron Works, and across country from there to Greenville."

"I should think you would feel afraid of getting lost without a guide, for it's a wild country between here and Moosehead, I have heard the lumbermen say."

"The wilder, the better," put in St. Clair. "We have a good map of the country, and a copy of Farrar's 'Moosehead Lake and the North Maine Wilderness,' and that is all the guide we want. I don't see what a

party wants of a guide, any way, unless for cooking, and lugging baggage. And," with a smile, "we are all accomplished cooks, and are not afraid of work. We don't do any at home, and it does us good to do a little when we get into the woods."

The landlady now appeared and told them she would show them their rooms. After getting located, they carried their light things to their apartments, and then went out and strolled down by the river. After supper they sat outdoors until the arrival of the team with their boats, which came along between eight and nine, and, after seeing everything unloaded and taken care of, they settled up with the teamsters, and made them a little present; then telling the man of all work to give them an early call in the morning, they retired to rest, to dream of moose-shooting in the northern wilderness.

CHAPTER III.

A SURPRISE AND A RACE.

THE people in the Colby Hotel were early risers, and at six o'clock Thursday morning the party had finished breakfast, and, after Wingate had paid the hotel bill, the young fellows "sacked" their baggage and stores down to the bank of the river, where the teamster, who was up even earlier than they were, had carried their boats.

It would seem as if the black flies and mosquitoes had heard of their coming, for, as Drake remarked, "if there was one, there was a million," and before launching the boats they besmeared themselves with "Jumboline," "Hind's Black Fly Cream," or whatever else they happened to have.

"Now, fellows," said Claude, "here are the boats. To the best of my belief, one is as good as another, but if anybody has a choice let him say so."

It had been previously determined that Claude, Foster, and Drake should be the crew for one boat. St. Clair, Robbins, and Wood for another, and Wingate, Maynard, and Le Roy for the third.

"I don't see any difference in the boats, but I do in the names," said Drake, "and I prefer the *Petrel*. Let us take that, Claude."

"It makes no difference to me. As Shakespeare says, 'What's in a name? A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.'"

"I suppose it would if it were called a Daisy for instance," remarked St. Clair, "and, if no fellow objects, our crew will take the *Daisy*."

"I don't," chirruped Wingate, "and We, Us & Co. will sail in the *Swallow*."

The boats were now launched and loaded, each one of a crew carrying his own belongings, aside a third of the stores and company baggage.

The crew of the *Petrel* was made up with Foster as coxswain, Emerson as stroke, and Drake as bow. In the *Swallow*, Le Roy was coxswain, Wingate stroke, and Maynard bow. And the *Daisy's* billet was: Robbins, coxswain; St. Clair, stroke; and Wood, bow. And the crews, like the boats, were very well matched.

When everything was in readiness for a start, Claude looked at his watch, and found it was seven o'clock, and from the feeling of the air it gave token of being a hot day. "Now, fellows," he said, "from where we are standing to the Mount Kineo House is about thirty-eight miles. It is possible to do it in a day, but we should have to work like beavers to accomplish it in that time."

"Don't let us hurry," remarked Robbins. "Two days are little enough to do it in, and we shall probably have some carries on the way. I say, take it easy."

"Good advice, Robbins," added Maynard, "and I am willing to accept it on my part. We want a chance to see the country."

“Then where shall we dine, and where shall we stop to-night?” queried Claude.

“For one, I say that I want to dine at some place where I can catch some trout, and I think the place selected for camping to-night ought to be near some good fishing ground,” and Wingate glanced around at his friends to learn if any of them were of his way of thinking.

“That’s the idea, old fellow,” put in Wood, who was out on his first trip of the kind; “I want a chance to do some fishing.”

“In that case,” added Claude “I think we had better pull to Long Pond Outlet, a distance of twelve miles, carry our boats and luggage around the dam, and then take our dinner there. Probably we shall find good fishing near the dam.”

“That will suit me,” remarked Le Roy, “and I think twelve miles of rowing before dinner is enough.”

“After dinner,” continued Claude, “we can run down to Brassau Lake, and pull over to Misery Stream, where we ought to strike some trout, and camp there to-night.”

No one made any objection to this arrangement, and it was decided settled, and at seven o’clock and thirty minutes the boats were pushed off and headed down river, the *Petrel* taking the lead, closely followed by the *Swallow* and *Daisy*.

The boys noticed that there was not much of a current, and the water had the appearance of being deep. They saw that the banks of the river were low, and that most of the land on either side had been cleared, and

was under cultivation. There was not much to see along the river, but, once out on the pond, they had some pretty views, and away in the south several wooded mountains towered toward the sky. The shores of the lake were pretty, and were wooded most of the distance.

They passed two farms on the left or north shore, which, like most everything else in that section, belonged to the Coburns of Skowhegan.

As they pulled along, they noticed many nice camping spots, and saw also that the lake was very irregular in shape. When they reached the narrows, they found the lake was only about a quarter of a mile wide at that point, and that in this vicinity rocks were very plenty, and not far under water.

The first intimation they had of them was when the *Petrel* ran on top of one and came within an ace of capsizing.

"Look out, fellows," sang out Claude, who caught a glimpse of several rocks under water close to him, "we are in a regular 'hop bed.' Row slowly, and keep your eyes peeled for rocks, or you will bring up on top of one, as we did."

Luckily for the bottom of the *Petrel*, it was a smooth shelving rock that she had struck, and she cleared it after a while, with no other mishap than taking in a little water.

For a mile the boys rowed slowly and carefully, and it was not until the lake had widened to a half-mile or more that they dared to pull their regular stroke. On their way down the pond, they passed the Upper and

Lower Churchill streams, both of which empty in on the north side, but they did not go very near them.

There was scarcely a ripple on the water, and the sun poured down its scorching heat with a power that almost wilted them. It was nearly eleven o'clock when they reached the dam, and very glad they all were to get out of the boats for a while.

"This looks like a new dam," remarked Foster, as he and Claude staggered up the steep bank with the *Petrel*.

"Yes, it is. That custom house officer at the hotel told me it was built only last fall."

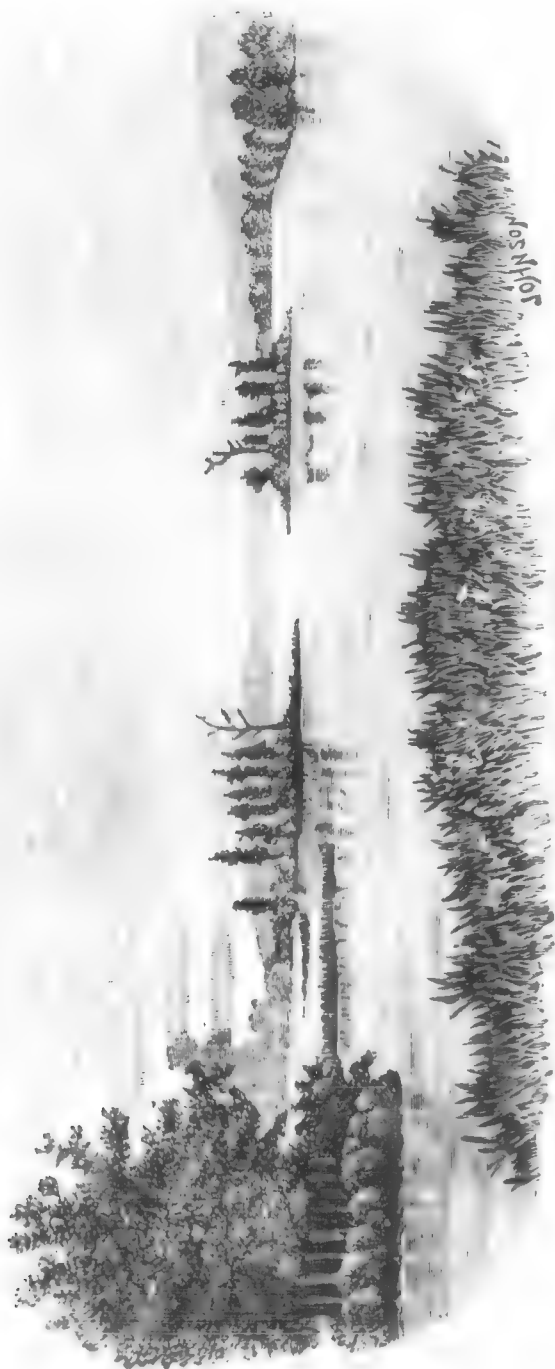
"'Jerusalem, my happy home!' ain't this hot!" exclaimed Foster, as he and Claude stopped on top of the bank a moment, while Billy wiped the perspiration from his face.

"Yes; I'll bet any fellow a hat that it's between ninety and a hundred. I don't believe we shall get many fish for dinner, the sun is so bright."

After the boats, stores, and baggage had been carried around the dam, and deposited on the river bank below, Wood, Drake, Foster, and Maynard went fishing, and the remainder of the party cut a little wood, and made preparations for dinner.

"Well, Claude," said Vingate, "what shall we have for dinner?"

"I don't know. It's too confounded hot to cook much. You had better open a couple of cans of that chicken and corned beef; two of each will do, and I will make some coffee, and we'll try hardtack in place of bread. If they catch any fish we will cook them,



LONG POND OUTLET.

JOHN SOY

and, in the meantime, I will fry some potatoes; Le Roy, make yourself useful, will you, instead of ornamental, and peel and slice potatoes enough for nine hungry villains, who are never so wicked but what they can eat."

"That's just like you, Claude," cried Le Roy, with a laugh. "Just as a fellow gets comfortably fixed, you rout him up, and set him at work," and Le Roy, with a grunt, crawled out from under the shade of a bush that had seemed to him the very place to enjoy a few moments before dinner.

About half past twelve the fishermen returned, with only six small trout, as a result of their patient casting, and a shout of derision went up from those in camp, at the exhibition of the catch.

"I guess you have been asleep, under the shade of the dam," remarked Robbins, as he took the fish, which were all cleaned, and placed them in the frying-pan.

"Not much we haven't. But I should like to have been," declared Wood, as he wiped his face on his handkerchief; "I don't see what you put those trout in the frying-pan for. You leave them out in the sun here fifteen minutes, and they will be all cooked."

"Well, this crowd are not doing any sun cooking to-day," replied Wingate.

"How is your appetite, boys?" queried Claude, about fifteen minutes later. "Dinner is ready."

"Oh, hang the dinner," said Drake. "I don't care for any; it's too hot to eat."

"You had better take something," advised Wingate, "or you'll be faint before supper."

"I'll take a mouthful or two, if you think best," and Claude, who acted as waiter, helped him with the others.

Dinner was soon disposed of, dishes washed up, everything packed, and soon they were afloat, running down the river, which was unusually high, nearly all the gates in the dam having been opened a few days before. This was a good thing for them, as it saved their carrying around Stony Brook Rapids, and they made only one carry, around the Rolling Dam. A good road follows the left bank of the river to a point about a mile beyond Little Brassau; but the day was so warm that all the boys took their chances in the boats, there not being any show for game if they walked, the season not being far enough advanced.

As they floated out into Little Brassau, however, they met with a genuine surprise. For standing in the water, nearly up to his belly, was a moose, the largest that any of the young fellows had ever seen.

The *Petrel* was the head boat, and Foster was the first to discover the moose, which was only a few rods from them. He whispered to Drake and Claude, and they ceased rowing, and Claude beckoned to the other two crews to stop also.

Each one of the party now watched the moose, which seemed strangely oblivious of their presence. He would drink a few swallows, and then gaze about him, then walk a few steps, and then drink again.

"Don't I wish it was October!" whispered Foster to Claude, and looked with longing eyes toward the moose.

The huge animal was the target of admiration for the whole party for five minutes or more, and then he turned slowly towards the boys, to wade to shore. As his head swung around, he discovered his appreciative audience, but he did not stop to cultivate their acquaintance.

With a frightened snort he dashed for the shore, the boys giving a yell, as he cleared the water, which served to start him off at the speed of a race horse.

"By gracious!" exclaimed Wood, when the war whoop had died away, "that is the first moose that I ever saw. What a monster he was."

"Now you're shouting," replied St. Clair. "Just think of shooting one of those fellows."

"I'd give fifty dollars to shoot one as large as that. But I don't believe I could have hit this one if I had fired at him. I was so excited I shook all over."

"That's the way with a tenderfoot," chuck 'd Robbins.

"Well, I know I'm green at this camping-out business, but I'll be as fresh as any of you before we get back," retorted Wood.

"I'll tell you one thing, fellows," remarked Maynard, "we don't want to say anything about that moose while we are at Kineo. If we do, there'll be a lot of those guides after him, and any of them would shoot him as quick now as they would in the open season."

"That's so," agreed Claude, "and we had better all follow Maynard's suggestion, and keep mum about seeing the moose. But we have lost time enough here ;

Misery Sands are eight miles away; and the sooner we start, the sooner we'll get there."

"I don't know anything about 'Misery Sands,'" said Le Roy, with a disconsolate look on his face, "but I know that Misery is right here, now."

"What are you driving at, Tommy?" inquired Wingate.

"Isn't it misery enough to be within a stone's throw of a moose, and not be able to shoot at him?"

"Correct you are," answered St. Clair, "but the law must be obeyed."

"I suppose so; but it goes awfully against the grain in a case like that."

"So much the more honor in keeping the law," added Foster.

"You are right, young man," said Claude, with a laugh. "Away we go now," he added to Drake, and the *Petrel* was once more moving down river.

"I think this river very appropriately named," remarked Drake, as he tugged away at his oar.

"Yes," added Foster, "we have seen to-day that the stream is fitly christened."

"There's Tom Fletcher Brook," said St. Clair, as they passed the mouth of a stream on the left-hand side of the river, named after a trapper who was drowned in this vicinity several years ago.

"Who was he?" queried Wood, with a smile.

"Tom Fletcher? Oh, he was the first man that ever fished the brook," and St. Clair winked to Robbins.

"You're sure of that, I suppose?"

"Certainly! I've got the papers to show for it."

"I can swear to that," added Robbins, with a chuckle, "for they're in my safe."

"How much do you suppose that moose would weigh, Tommy?" questioned Wingate.

"Twice as much as half," answered Le Roy, laughing.

"Squit your fooling. What do you think he'd weigh?"

"Oh, I should set him at twelve or fifteen hundred."

"Ounces?" queried Maynard, saucily.

"No, tons, you jackass!" shouted Le Roy, and Maynard collapsed.

From Little Brassau down to the lake it was all good water, and the boats were propelled easily, most of the time being quite near together, so that conversation between the occupants of the different boats was carried on occasionally.

As the fleet cleared the river and floated out on the larger expanse of the lake, the *Petrel*, a little in the lead, was turned to the southeast.

"Do you remember those races we had at the Richardson Lakes, Claude, on our first camping-out trip," and a tinge of color came into Foster's face, as his mind ran back to that summer.

"Certainly I do. I don't think I shall ever forget them. What fun we had!"

"What's the matter with having some now?" queried Drake. "We are ahead of the rest of the boys; suppose we keep there?"

"Pull a little stronger stroke, then, and we'll gain two or three boat's lengths on those fellows, before they find out what time o' day it is," and Foster glanced

slily around at the other boats to notice how far they were behind.

Claude and Drake accepted the coxswain's suggestion, and began to put a little more muscle into their strokes, and to lengthen them a trifle, the result being a gap of three or four hundred feet between the *Petrel* and the other boats before their crews discovered it.

"By the Great Horn Spoon!" exclaimed Le Roy, who was the first to notice how the *Petrel* was creeping away, "Foster is up to his old tricks again. He's stolen a march on us."

"What do you mean?" cried Wingate and Maynard in one breath.

"I mean that the *Petrel* is running away from us. Look for yourselves."

The crew of the *Swallow* turned their heads, and at a glance saw the game the *Petrels* were playing. Then they bent to their oars, and the *Swallow* skimmed the water nearly as lightly as its namesake.

"Pull, Charlie," urged Frank Maynard, "we'll overhaul the *Petrel* yet."

"If we don't do that, we won't let the *Daisy* overhaul us," and Wingate settled down to business.

The coxswain of the *Daisy*, Robbins, had just finished a funny story about negro life in Florida, which had elicited a hearty laugh from his crew, when, glancing toward the boats ahead, he saw that the others were fast leaving him, and he began to get excited.

"Oh, see here, fellows, this won't do. Quit your laughing and pull like the old scratch. The *Petrel* and *Swallow* are running away from us."

St. Clair and Wood glanced in the direction of the other boats, and then quickened their strokes.

"By gracious!" exclaimed Wood, "it's a race. Pull, St. Clair, we are not going in third if I can help it."

"All right! I'll do my best, Dave, but they have the start of us."

The crews of all the boats were now thoroughly interested in the contest, and were all pulling the best they were capable of. But they were pretty well matched, and, although the boats were moving much faster than they had before, the relative distance between them was the same.

"Well, Foster, the Daisies have woke up at last," said Claude, "and they are just humping her."

"Let them hump," replied the coxswain, as he turned around to look at them, "they'll have to stop and spit on their hands if they catch us to-day."

"A stern chase is a long chase," added Drake, with a grin, and he pulled just a little harder, if anything, than before.

"Do we gain on the *Petrel* any, Le Roy?" queried Wingate, when ten minutes had been wiped out of the book of time.

"Not a gain," replied the coxswain, "it's a regular nip-and-tuck business."

"The *Daisy* is creeping up on us a little, or else I imagine it," puffed Maynard.

"Well, I guess you imagine it, then!" declared Le Roy, after turning and taking a look at his friends. "Bend your backs—don't be afraid of a little muscle;

if you let those fellows pull by us you haven't pride enough for a cockroach."

"What the dickens has pride to do with a cockroach?" queried Wingate.

"That's the conundrum, Charlie. When you answer it, I'll give you another."

By direction of Claude, Foster was steering for Misery Sands, and, when within a mile of the beach, an incident happened that lost the *Petrel* the race.

While going at her highest speed she suddenly stopped so abruptly as to pitch every fellow in her toward the bow of the boat, and for a moment her crew thought there had been an earthquake, or some other great commotion. They were all piled up together, and as soon as they could collect their wits, they regained their places, and began an investigation.

They found the situation of the boat most peculiar for it had run into the crotch of an old water-soaked tree that was floating about the lake, whose prongs were just even with the top of the water; the *Petrel* had struck fairly between the two limbs, and had gone into the opening about a third of her length, and then brought up as solid as if she was fastened in a vise.

A thorough investigation showed that the boat was not injured, which was wonderful under the circumstances; but it was liable to be, if not soon freed from the grasp of the drifting tree, as the pressure was so strong that the *Petrel's* ribs were sprung a little out of shape. That the light craft had not collapsed, when it brought up so suddenly, was due to the heavy load it carried.

"What is the matter?" called Le Roy, as the *Swallow* came near them, and her crew ceased rowing.

"We are in the jaws of a sea-serpent," replied Claude, who was studying the situation.

"Is your boat hurt any?"

"Not much, I guess," answered Foster. "She's having a regular bear hug just now, but she'll come out of it all right, I guess."

"Do you want any help?"

"I think not," returned Claude; "we have one of the axes with us."

The *Daisy* dashed up to the scene of the mishap just in time for her crew to hear Claude's last remark, and Robbins, who was quick to catch at any advantage, said, —

"Pull, fellows, for all you're worth. Now is our time. You heard what Claude said; they don't require help. Pull now like sardines before the Swallows get under way again."

"We'll go on, then, Claude," remarked Le Roy; "you'll find us at the beach. Give way, fellows."

Before the crew of the *Swallow* had given the first dip to their oars, the *Daisy* shot by them like a streak of lightning, and Robbins called out, "I say, Tommy, throw us your painter, and we'll tow you to shore."

"What gall!" remarked Le Roy to his crew. "Are you going to stand that?"

"I'm not," replied Wingate, laughing, "I'm sitting down to it."

"No joking!" cried the coxswain, indignantly. "It was a mean trick for those fellows to pass us that way."

They never even stopped to see if the Petrels needed help. All they cared for was getting the lead."

"You wrong them, Tommy," replied Maynard. "They heard Claude's answer to your last question, and they took advantage of it; that was all. Trust Robbins for improving all the chances. George hasn't been in Florida long enough yet for the climate to spoil him."

"It's no use, Le Roy," remarked Wingate, after a glance over his shoulder at the *Daisy*. "They are six boat-lengths ahead of us now, and we are not more than three-quarters of a mile from shore."

"Let's try a spurt," suggested Wingate, "and see if we can gain on them any. Quicken your stroke, Charlie."

"All right, here goes," and the stroke oar of the *Swallow* began pulling a rattler

The increased speed had the effect of shortening the distance between the rivals but a short time, for the moment the *Daisy's* crew noticed that the *Swallows* were closing the gap they quickened their stroke also, determined to hold all the advantage they had gained. And they succeeded in doing it, for shortly after the boat ran up on the smooth sand of the beach, and the race was won. The *Swallow* was no great distance behind, and by the time the two boats' crews unloaded their stores and baggage the Petrels had succeeded in freeing themselves from the "sea-serpent," and were making good progress toward the landing.

CHAPTER IV.

THE FIRST NIGHT'S CAMP.

"How do you like the *Swallow*, Le Roy?" inquired Robbins, while the boys were waiting for their friends.

"First rate, I don't want any better boat."

"Oh, she's a good boat," replied George, "but a little slow — yes, a very little slow," and he winked at the discomfited Swallows, and smiled saucily.

"You're a blower, George," declared Wingate. "You know we didn't have a fair show. It's my opinion we can beat you, and we are ready to try it again any time — eh, boys?" with a questioning glance at the Swallows.

"Those are my sentiments," added Le Roy, "and I believe the *Swallow* can skim away from your old tub as easily as her namesake can from a hen."

"Old tub!" cried Wood, indignantly. "The next time we catch you afloat, we'll leave you hull down if there's room to do it."

"What's all the chaffing about?" inquired Claude, as the *Petrel* slid up on the beach.

"Why, the Daisies are so conceited over winning the race, if you can call it a race under the circumstances, that you can't touch one of them with a ten-foot pole," and Le Roy laughed derisively.

"Sour grapes!" cried St. Clair, rubbing his finger up and down his nose in the most exasperating manner.

"Oh, bother the race!" chipped in Drake. "The great question of the day is, when shall we have supper, and what are we going to have? I'm as hungry as a wolf."

"Will you eat raw chickens?" queried Foster, with a smile.

"Of course not, you sand-lotter from the Pacific slope."

"Then you're not as hungry as a wolf. Because a wolf will every time."

"Has you there, Bob," chuckled Wingate.

"Gentlemen of the Lake and Forest Club!" called Claude.

"Hear! hear!" shouted several.

"It is now 5:30 by the town clock, or rather by my watch, and I propose that three of the party row around to the mouth of Misery Stream, which lies just beyond us, and see if there are any trout in the market. That three others prepare a camp for the night, and that the other three members get the supper. Now, who will tempt the trout?"

"I!" shouted Wood; "and I," "and I!" added Wingate and Drake.

"Stand not upon the order of your going, but go at once, then," said Claude, "and may good luck attend you."

"Is that fellow stopping round here, Claude?" queried Drake, with a wink at the other members of the party.

"I can tell you better when I see how many fish you bring back," replied Claude, who was never at loss for an answer to any chaffing.

The fishermen jointed their rods, found their fly-hooks, and, after smearing their hands and faces plentifully with "fly medicine," not forgetting to pocket a supply of it, launched the *Swallow*, and pulled around to the mouth of Misery Stream, which they thought the most likely place for furnishing the trout.

"Now, who will build the camp?" questioned Claude. "Remember, this is all volunteer service. We will arrange the regular crews for cooking and other duties before we leave Kineo."

"I for one," said Foster, and he was joined by Maynard and St. Clair.

"Then, it remains for Le Roy, Robbins, and myself to provide supper."

"And the sooner you get it the better," added Foster.

The three camp-builders now turned their attention to preparing a shelter for the night, while the three cooks made preparations for supper.

"You act as *chef*, Claude," suggested Le Roy, "and Robbins and I will assist; and, as a fire is the first thing needed, I will cut some wood."

"And I'll bring some water," added Robbins.

"And I'll overhaul the stores and see what we have to eat," remarked Claude, as he commenced an inspection of the commissary department.

Before proceeding to their duties, each of the shore party was compelled to anoint himself with the fly

compound, for the mosquitoes had reached the camping ground about as soon as the members of the club, and were presenting their bills with a prompt demand for settlement.

The weather was so warm that a very slight shelter with a fire in front would answer for the night, and the camp-builders decided on a "lean-to" as the easiest to build, and in the immediate vicinity they found plenty of material for their purpose. It took them about an hour to construct a camp to their liking, and then they felled and cut up sufficient trees to enable them to keep a blaze all night, and in front of the camp they arranged a large pile of fuel all ready to fire after dark, and piled the balance near, where it could be got at easily. Then they joined the cooking party to see how supper was progressing. Their work had given them a good appetite, and they were anxious for an opportunity to satisfy it.

"What is the bill of fare, Claude?" inquired Foster, as the camp-builders gathered around the cooks' fire.

"Cold corned beef, currant jelly, fried potatoes, hot biscuit, and fried trout, if the boys bring in any fish."

"We shall soon know what luck they have had, for here they come," added Maynard.

In a few moments the fishermen were on shore, exhibiting a handsome string of thirty trout, averaging over half a pound each. As they were all dressed, some of them were put in the frying-pan at once, and in the course of thirty minutes they were all cooked, and Claude announced that supper was ready.

Tin plates, cups, knives and forks were brought forth, and each one helped himself; and then they squatted around in a circle and proceeded to business.

Amid a merry round of jest and repartee the evening meal was despatched, and then the dishes were washed up.

When everything had been cleared away, Wingate started a song, and the party all joined; and for an hour the forest resounded with music. As the evening advanced, however, the attacks of the mosquitoes increased rapidly, and by ten o'clock all retired to rest, well protected by mosquito netting.

Light was just breaking in the east, Friday morning, when the fishermen of the night before, by a preconcerted signal, rose quickly and stole silently out from among their friends, and, launching the *Daisy*, rowed softly away from the landing, and reached the mouth of Misery just as the first birds were singing their matin songs.

The air was fragrant with the aroma of the forests, the lake as still as the blue sky overhead, and the boys, while intent on fishing, were not so entirely preoccupied as not to notice and enjoy the opening beauties of the new day.

Having reached a suitable place for trying their luck, they began casting, each one hoping to have the honor of landing the first fish.

Drake was the lucky man. He had scarcely dropped his flies upon the water when he had a handsome rise, struck his fish in good shape, and, after ten minutes of fine sport, he reeled in his line, getting the

fish near enough for Wingate to net him. The trout weighed a pound and a quarter, and the fishermen were well satisfied with the commencement of the sport.

After the first fish had been landed, the trout began rising all around the boat, in a manner that drove their would-be captors almost frantic with excitement. For an hour they had the prettiest fly-fishing that Wingate had ever witnessed, and the party took seventy fish, none, however, quite as heavy as the first one struck by Drake.

Then occurred one of those unaccountable changes that all fishermen have experienced. The trout left off rising, and disappeared. Not a sign of a rise in any direction, and, although the fellows fished steadily for an hour and a half longer, there was not another fish taken.

While they were debating the expediency of returning to camp, the report of a rifle echoed and reëchoed across the lake, and attracted the fishermen's attention.

"That is a signal for us to return, fellows," said Wingate.

"Here, Drake, you're in the bow; place the butts of the rods under the forward seats, and then we'll pull for the shore. That is, you and Wood can, and I'll steer."

"Nothing mean about you," remarked Drake, as he took care of the rods, and picked up an oar.

"I'm glad to learn that for a certainty," replied Charlie, laughing. "Do you know, at times I've been afraid there was."

The droll manner in which he delivered the last sen-

tence set his hearers into a gale of laughter. After controlling their mirth, they dropped their oar blades into the water, and started with a stroke that sent the *Daisy* rapidly toward the camp.

"I hope breakfast is all ready but frying the fish," remarked Wood. "This early rising makes a fellow hungry. I feel as if I had been without food for a week."

"I see," suggested Drake, "you have a kind of a weakly feeling."

"Come, come, now!" protested Wingate. "That is too bad. Before breakfast, too."

"That *bon mot* was to improve his appetite," explained Drake, with a laugh.

"To kill it, you mean," suggested Wood.

As the boat shot up on the beach opposite the camp-fire, all but Claude rushed down for a look at the fish, which Wingate proudly exposed to view.

"You have made a good catch," said Maynard, looking at the fish, and taking the rods from the boat.

"Correct," answered Drake.

"What made you so sly about it, Charlie?" queried Robbins. "I should have enjoyed going with you."

"I dare say. But in this case three completed the party. Will be pleased to have your company some other time."

"Are those fish dressed?" inquired Claude, from the fire.

"Nary a dress," returned Wood.

"Then, somebody, dress them. How many have you?"

"Seventy."

"We'll keep half of them for dinner, but you may as well dress them all now."

The two assistants of the cook, aided by Drake and Wood, began dressing the fish, while Wingate washed out the boat.

As fast as the fish were dressed, Foster carried them to Claude, who kept at the cooking until half the number had been fried. Then breakfast was announced. The balance of the fish, nicely cleaned, were rolled up in birch bark, and put in a box that had been left on the ground by some former camping party.

"I expect we shall find some pretty lively water, the first three miles on the river," said Claude, while the party were breakfasting.

"I don't believe it will be any worse than some we found on the West Branch trip," replied St. Clair.

"A bad piece of rapids is an exhilaration," added Maynard. "It makes things exciting to run a piece of water in a boat when you feel just as if you would rather be on shore."

"I don't know about that," said Wood, doubtfully. "The lighter the boats are, the easier you can run the falls, and I think it will be best for three of us to walk along the river bank in the worst places, and have only two in each boat."

"I agree with you," remarked Claude.

When breakfast was finished and the dishes washed, it did not take long to load the boats, and in half an hour from the time the party had finished eating they were afloat and pulling across the lake to the outlet.

This was only a short distance, and, reaching the river, the boats were pulled in to the north side, and Drake, Wood, and Le Roy stepped on shore, leaving only two in each boat.

The navigators then took their places in the bow and stern, with paddles instead of oars, and prepared to run the rapids, which extended for three miles down to Gertrude Island.

As the boys were about to push off, a boat came in sight, being poled up the rapids by one man, its only occupant. As the craft came nearer they saw it was a birch canoe.

As the canoe-man cleared the white water, he noticed the boats, which he appeared not to have seen before, and poled over to them.

"Good morning!" said Claude, as the man stopped his canoe, within a few feet of the boats.

"Mornin'," replied the man. "You goin' down river in those boats?"

"That is our intention."

"D'ye know anything 'bout the river?"

"Not a great deal."

"Well, then, just keep yer eyes skinned at the dam and Sam's Pitch, or those nice boats'll get ye into trouble."

"I guess not," replied Maynard. "We've seen white water before."

"Wall, ye'll feel it to-day," with a coarse attempt at a joke, "if ye ain't carful," and, laughing loudly, he poled up toward the lake.

"I would like to know if any more of them escaped

from the menagerie?" and Wood threw a questioning glance at his friends.

They laughed, and Wingate informed him that such characters as the one who had just left them were a common production of that part of the country.

"Pass me my gun, Frank!" and Le Roy stepped nearer the *Swallow*.

Maynard picked it up, and, laughing, said, "You know it is close season for all kinds of game, Tommy."

"That may be. But it's not close season for foxes, and we may see one. Pull the covering off, will you?"

"Here you are," handing him the gun, "and I'll bet five dollars you don't see a fox, much less shoot one."

"I never bet," replied Le Roy, in a solemn tone. "In fact, it is better not to bet."

"You bet it is," added Wingate.

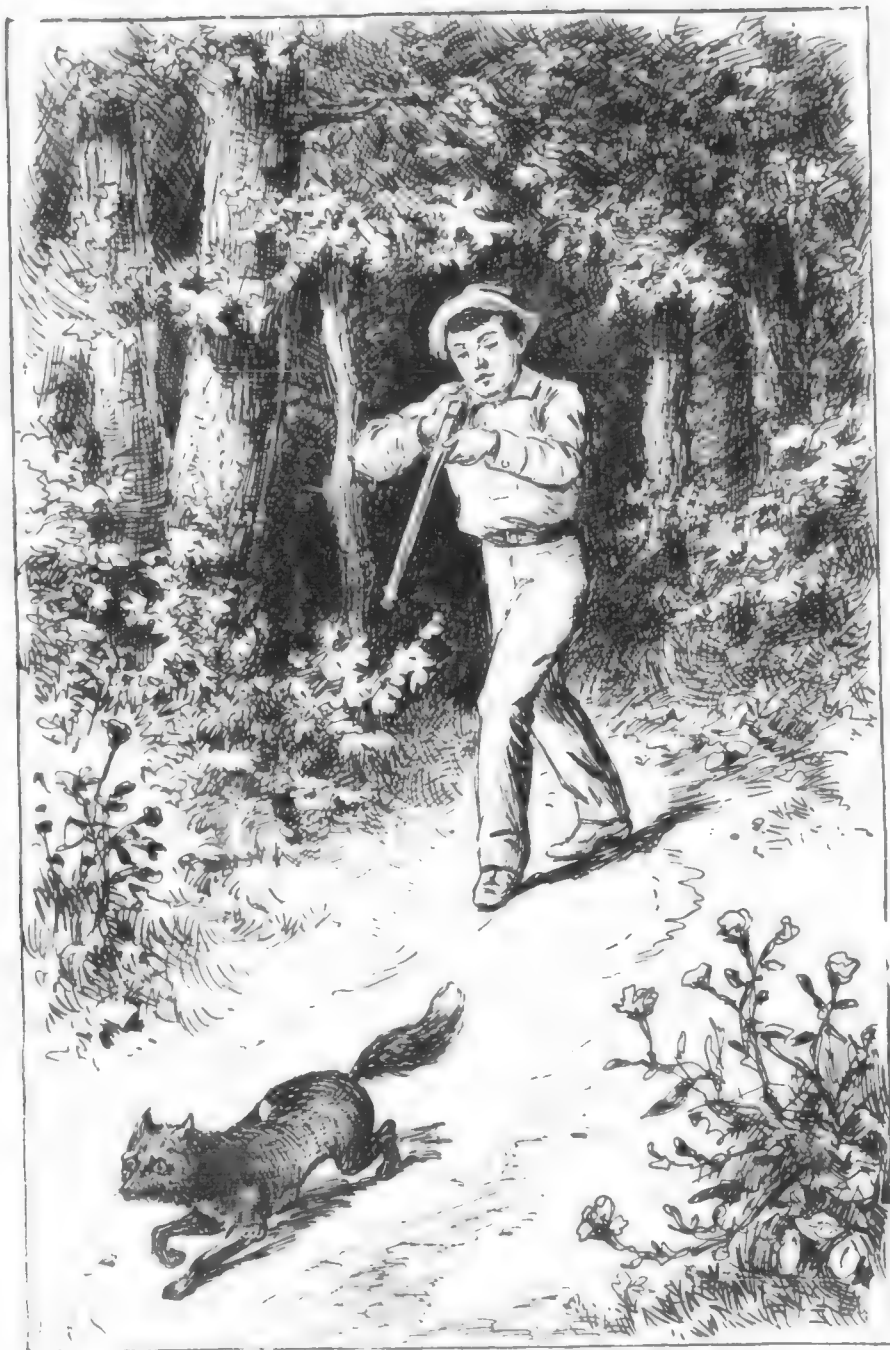
"And thebettist often gets bit," suggested Claude.

"Better make a start, or we shall not reach Kineo to-day," remarked Drake, starting along the river road, and Le Roy and Wood followed him.

The boats were then paddled out from the shore and headed down river, the boatmen scanning the stream intently, and keeping their eyes wide open for rocks or other obstructions.

The *Petrel* was ahead, with Claude in the bow, and, as he was as good a boatman as there was in the party, the occupants of the *Swallow* and the *Daisy* thought best to follow closely in his wake.

As the water grew stronger, the boats shot ahead faster, and, successfully passing the dangers of Sam's



LE BOY'S GUN CAME QUICKLY TO HIS SHOULDER. Page 65.

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Pitch and the Dam, had in half an hour reached the island, and were paddled to the north shore to await the arrival of the "three tramps," as Foster called them.

"Now, fellows, if you please, let me go ahead," said Le Roy, as he slipped a couple of shells into his gun, "and if I see a moose I'll make him run, if nothing more."

"That is all you would do, probably," bantered Wood, "unless you might possibly hit him by accident."

"Oh, stop your gassing, and give me a couple of hundred yards the start of you."

"Strike out, then," said Drake, "starting."

Le Roy had soon covered his two hundred yards, and a turn of the road, a minute later, hid him from his companions. With eyes ever on the alert, and ears open to the slightest sound, he walked on silently and carefully for about two miles, when he stopped a moment, to see if he could hear his friends.

He looked back and listened intently, but they were neither to be seen nor heard, and, turning his head, he was about to resume his walk when he heard a slight noise beyond, and a second later a fox walked out of the woods on the left side of the road, and started down river in the middle of the road.

Le Roy's gun came quickly to his shoulder, a report instantly followed, and the next moment the most astonished fox in Maine jumped about five feet into the air, with his hindquarters well peppered with duck shot. He came down all in a heap, and, while he was

struggling to his feet, Tommy let him have the contents of the other barrel, which took effect in his head, killing him instantly.

Le Roy stepped up to his prize, and, while he was looking him over, his two friends came running at full speed towards him.

"What have you shot, Tommy?" cried Drake.

"A fox!"

"Yes, I see. Quite a large one, too."

"Do you call that a large fox?" inquired Wood, who had never seen one before. "Why he is not any larger than my dog."

"How large did you expect a fox was? As large as an ox?" and Le Roy laughed, and winked at Drake.

"Of course not, you grinning hyena. But I thought they were larger than this one."

"This is a pretty good-sized fox," replied Drake.

"What are you going to do with him, Tommy?"

"Oh, take him along with us and bake him for dinner," with a sly wink at Drake.

But Wood caught the wink in transit, and commenced laughing. "Don't think I am quite so green as that," he remarked to Le Roy. "I saw you wink, and I want you to understand, if this is my first trip into the wilderness, I am not quite a fool. Who ever heard of eating a fox?"

"I would eat him before I would starve," retorted Tommy, laughing.

"Perhaps I would myself," said Dave, "but we are not in a starving condition."

While the talk had been going on, Le Roy had

fumbled in all his pockets until he found a piece of string, with which he tied the two hind legs of poor Reynard together, and, slinging him on his gun barrels, they started along the road, this time in company. A few minutes' walk brought them to the point on the river opposite Gertrude Island, where the boats were awaiting their arrival.

"Where's the fellow who wanted to bet five dollars that I would not see a fox?" cried Le Roy, as he stepped up to the *Swallow* and held the fox on high by the end of his tail.

"He's just stepped into the woods," replied Maynard, laughing.

"Yes, he has," retorted Tommy. "Don't you be so fresh, old tellow, the next time."

"What are you going to do with him, Le Roy?" asked Foster.

"Well, I told Wood that we should bake him for dinner, but he didn't quite swallow my statement."

"Singular," replied Maynard, with a chuckle.

"Extraordinary," added Wingate.

"A regular doubter," remarked St. Clair.

Le Roy laid the fox in the *Swallow*, took the shells from his gun, put it back in the case, and then announced that he was ready to go on.

"I think," said Claude, "that, as it is so hot, and," looking at his watch, "almost eleven o'clock, we had better stop on the island until two or three o'clock, and then do the rest of the distance, which is only four miles, in the cooler part of the day. What do you say, boys?"

“That will suit me for one,” declared Robbins.

The other members of the party also expressed themselves as satisfied with the proposition, and the three boats were propelled to the island, where the crews landed.

“This is a better place for dinner than on the mainland,” remarked Maynard.

“That is so,” added St. Clair. “We get a little breeze here, and the flies and mosquitoes are not so thick.”

The boats were drawn up on the island just far enough to prevent them drifting away, but were not unloaded, the fellows taking out only what they needed for the noonday meal. They concluded to have this at twelve o'clock, and preliminaries with that end in view were at once commenced.

“Do you think our stores will be at Kineo when we get there, Claude?” inquired Drake, as he assisted the leader of the party in starting a fire.

“Certainly. They left Boston Monday, and we should find them at the Kineo House sure to-night.”

“I hope we shall not have to wait for them,” put in Wood.

“I don't believe we shall,” added Maynard. “You know we are to spend Sunday there, and surely they will be along before Monday morning, even if they are not there to-night.”

“Don't let's borrow any trouble over the matter,” philosophically suggested Wingate; “trouble comes fast enough any way in this world.”

"You are right," remarked Foster; "but if you don't believe me ask Tommy's fox?"

"That fox is not talking so much as he was," suggested St. Clair. "He is a very grave fellow."

"He ought to be put in his grave," laughed Wood. "He begins to smell already."

"Don't talk so much without saying something," said Tommy, with a strong tone of sarcasm in his voice.

"Great Scott! isn't this warm, though!" exclaimed Foster, staggering to the fire and throwing down an armful of wood beside it. "We ought to have eaten a cold lunch this noon."

"A warm dinner and a cup of hot coffee is good enough for me," said Maynard.

"You can't expect freezing weather in July, even up in this country," declared Robbins.

But Foster did not answer him; he only wiped his perspiring brow and winked. He did not feel equal to an argument.

The dinner was partaken of leisurely, and afterward Claude made a sketch from the island. At about four o'clock the boys launched their boats and proceeded toward Kineo. There were no more rapids, although there were several shoal places at the mouth of the river, and all the boys knew it, because every boat ran aground, and it took them some time to get off and find deep water.

Once in the lake, however, they had no further trouble, and at six o'clock drew their boats up on the beach near the hotel, and, shouldering part of their traps, went up to the house.

Landlord Dennen met them at the door and gave them a hearty welcome, and Claude told him they should stop with him until Monday morning. He gave them a dozen or more letters, and informed them that their goods had not come, and then the party registered, were shown to rooms, and retired to prepare for supper.

CHAPTER V.

FROM KINEO TO SEEBOOMOOK.

THE stores that the club were looking for had not arrived at Kineo, as Claude expected, but they came on the steamer Saturday morning, and the boys opened the different packages and boxes, changing the goods to other packages that could be done up more compactly.

As the steamer did not arrive until half past nine, it took the party the rest of the forenoon to get the stores arranged for transportation in such a manner as suited them.

In the afternoon Robbins, Foster, Drake, and Wood made the ascent of Mount Kineo, while the other members of the party interviewed the hotel people, also guides and guests, about their proposed trip, getting all the information they could about the route they were to take, and asking especially about what camps they were likely to find, and where located.

In the evening they talked over the arrangements for the start from Kineo, and it was decided to hire the *Day Dream*, a small steamer belonging to the hotel, to take them to the Northwest Carry, and that they would start at eight o'clock.

Claude, with Foster as assistant, was elected to do the cooking for the first week, the entire party, how-

ever, to be under the chief cook's direction for the entire trip, and, as the cooks were to be changed once a week, each one in turn would have command of the party.

As they were away for a "Summer's Outing," it was agreed that there should be no long stretches of travel unless it was absolutely necessary, and that they should take the trip in the easiest way possible. As Drake put it, they were willing to have the largest possible amount of fun, and the smallest possible amount of work.

There being several ministers at the hotel, divine services were held on Sunday in the large parlor, and the entire party attended morning and evening, the afternoon being spent in chatting with a few friends whom they had found stopping at Kineo, one of whom they had become acquainted with two years before, while on their trip down the West Branch.

At sharp seven o'clock on Monday morning the boys filed into the dining-room for breakfast. It had been understood the night before that there was to be no loitering, and that every member of the party was to be ready to sail precisely at eight o'clock.

Captain Brown had agreed to have all their boats, stores, and baggage on board at the hour named, and be ready to sail the moment they stepped on deck. He was as good as his word, for when the party reached the steamer they found the fasts cast off, and the captain holding the boat to the wharf by one of the stanchions.

"Good morning, young gentlemen," remarked the

captain, pleasantly, as they stepped on board; "you have just saved your passage. A moment later, and I should have sailed without you."

"That's right, captain," replied Claude; "always sail on time."

"Whether you have any passengers or not," added Wingate.

The captain pushed the steamer away from the wharf, and started for the wheel-house, remarking that people who got left two or three times were generally on time after such an experience.

"I agree with you, captain," answered Claude; and, turning to his friends, "Now, fellows, let's see if our things are all here."

Upon looking over their stores and baggage everything was found to be on board, and, with their minds at ease on this important matter, they turned their attention to the lake and its surroundings. As Emerson, Wingate, St. Clair, and Drake were the only members of the party who had participated in the trip down the West Branch, they began a running description of points of interest along the route.

"Can we see those mountains you made the ascent of, Claude?" inquired Frank Maynard, joining in the conversation.

"Yes. There are the Spencer Peaks behind that low mountain; Little Kineo it is called. And Mount Katahdin you will see from a point higher up the lake."

"Those Spencer Mountains are very symmetrical in shape," remarked Le Roy. "Was it a hard climb to the top of them?"

"Yes, rather hard. I should not care to do it every day in the week."

"What is that island we have just passed?" asked Foster.

"Farm Island," replied Wingate. "It is quite large."

"Yes, I heard Captain Brown say once there were about twelve hundred acres in it, and there are larger islands than this in the lower part of the lake. Sugar Island, for instance, has five thousand acres in it."

The boys now strolled to the wheel-house, and gathered in a group around the windows, and questioned the captain about the numerous mountains they saw, the names of which he gave them. In the vicinity of Centre Island he pointed out Mount Katahdin to them, and those who had not been of the party two years before looked on it with reverence and longing.

"By Jove! I should have liked to have been with you, Claude, when you made the ascent of Katahdin," remarked Maynard.

"I wish you had been, Frank. We had a first-class time on that trip."

"I suppose you called it a tiptop time when you reached the summit?" And Le Roy, who had given vent to this atrocious pun, looked blandly off across the lake.

"I guess Tommy is getting hungry," remarked Wood, when the laugh was over.

The boat now entered the northwest arm of the lake, at the head of which they would bid farewell to the steamboat. Word had been sent to Ferd Lane the day

before to have a team at the landing at half past ten, to haul the boats and supplies across the carry.

Before the steamer reached the landing, the team could be seen in waiting, and a man and boy beside it.

"This is a good beginning," declared Claude. "We left Kineo on time this morning, and the team is here to meet us, so we shall lose no time in getting over the carry."

When the steamer had stopped, the boats were first taken on shore, then the baggage and stores, and as Captain Brown had a party waiting at Kineo to be taken to the Kennebec Dam, he lost very little time over the disembarking, but, the moment the last of the boys and their belongings were out of the steamer, he wished them "good-bye" and "good luck," tooted the whistle three times, and the next moment the steamer was heading down the lake, and the boys felt as if the last link between them and civilization had been broken.

"Are you Mr. Lane?" inquired Wingate, speaking to the man who, with the boy, had been intently watching the party.

"I s'pose I am."

"Not quite certain of it. Well, that don't matter. You see what we have here in the way of baggage and stores, beside our three boats, that we wish hauled over the carry to the pond. Now, what will you charge for doing it, and how long will it take you?"

"Wall, I'll have ter make three loads on account o' the boats, and it'll take the rest of the day. I can't haul but one load before dinner for it's most eleven

o'clock now. And I allers charge two dollars per load."

"All right. I am willing to pay you that, and we'll help you what we can beside."

The question as to what should constitute the first load was settled by Claude, who said they must have provisions enough to get dinner with, to the exclusion of anything else, and no one objected to that, for they all wanted dinner.

"We shall have to camp over on the river somewhere to-night if it is going to take him all day to haul the things over," remarked Maynard.

"That is so, Frank," added Claude. "The guide-book says that we enter the main river just opposite Seeboomook Island, and that it is a good place to camp. How is it, Mr. Lane?"

"Oh, ther's good camping spots on the island. Most everybody who goes across camps there."

"Then, the island will be our home to-night," said Wingate.

The *Petrel* was now fastened on the sled in such a manner that she would ride without chafing, and then what stores they could find room for were added, and the team started, the members of the club following in the rear, each one carrying something.

Arrived at the pond, the team was unloaded, and Wingate charged Lane to be very careful in handling and hauling the other boats, and agreed to meet him when he came with the last load and pay the bill.

"Now," said Claude, "the boat will not carry us all, and, as it is most noon, Foster and myself, with Rob-

bins and Frank, will go first, and make a start towards dinner. And, as we can carry but very little with four in the boat, we will only take an axe, a bag of potatoes, and a couple of pails and dippers. Then Frank can return with the boat, and bring back two more of you, and some more grub."

"All right," replied Robbins, "only let us get started, or the mosquitoes will eat us up alive. Good gracious! hear them buzz. It sounds like a sawmill."

Those who were left by the meadow pulled grass and picked up a few sticks and bushes, and started a smudge to drive away the mosquitoes while they were waiting.

The *Petrel* made the trip safely to the island, and, after Foster, Claude, and Robbins went on shore, Frank returned to the pond for another load.

Wingate and St. Clair accompanied him back, and they carried all the provisions necessary for dinner.

Claude came down to the water and met the boat as she touched the shore. "What have you brought this time, Frank?" queried the head cook, as he took hold of the bow of the boat and pulled her up a little way.

"I have brought the box of things we packed up for dinner, the other axe, some dishes, and a bag of hard-tack."

"Good, I guess we can get along till supper time with what we have now. Give me the box, and St. Clair, you, and Charlie bring up the other collateral."

"All right, we're good for that," replied Wingate.

"Now, Frank, by the time you get back with Wood

and Drake, dinner will be ready," and Claude started up to camp with the box.

"I am glad of that," shouted Maynard, as he pushed off; "there's a big hole in my stomjack, that needs filling."

When Frank reached the carry the second time, he found the team there with the *Swallow*, the balance of the stores, and part of the baggage. Mr. Lane was just unloading.

"Shall we load the *Swallow* and bring her along?" asked Wood.

"No! dinner will be ready by the time we get back, and I am half starved. Pitch in a few things, and let's be off."

"Tell that feller that wanted to pay me that I'll be here by four o'clock with the last load," said Mr. Lane, as the boys pushed off.

"I will," replied Maynard. "He'll be here by the time you are."

"What kind of an island is that where we are going to camp?" queried Drake.

"Oh, it's an average kind of an island," returned Frank, roguishly. "It is composed mostly of soil, rocks, etc., and is surrounded by water."

"You don't say so," replied Drake. "Your reply reminds me of the Irishman's description of a pig."

"What was that?"

"A pace of flish wid a squale at one ind of it."

"Now it's your turn, Maynard," laughed Wood.

"I've nothing more to say, except, blast these flies. There are about forty chewing my ears."

"Where's your fly medicine?"

"In my bag."

"Try mine, then. I hate to see you suffer," and Wood tossed his bottle to Maynard, who deftly caught it.

After Frank had covered himself well with the fly preparation, he told his friends all he could about the camping place, and by the time he had finished his description the boat was in sight of the island, and they could see for themselves.

"What's the news, Frank?" inquired Foster, as the three new-comers approached the place where dinner was being served up.

"Lane had come with the *Swallow* and another load of our plunder, and says he will be there at four o'clock with the last one, and he wants the treasurer of this crowd to be on hand with his nickels."

"I'll be there," replied Wingate.

"Of course you will. But is dinner ready? That is the question that interests me."

"All ready, Frank," returned Claude. "Take right hold and help yourself. Fall to, fellows, while things are hot."

"While they are hot," repeated Wood. "You don't suppose they'll cool any such a day as this, do you?"

"They might in time."

Claude and Foster were now busy in waiting upon their friends, and when they had attended to the wants of the others they ate their dinner, while their friends sat with them and chatted over their morning's work.

"Charlie," said Claude, when he had finished his



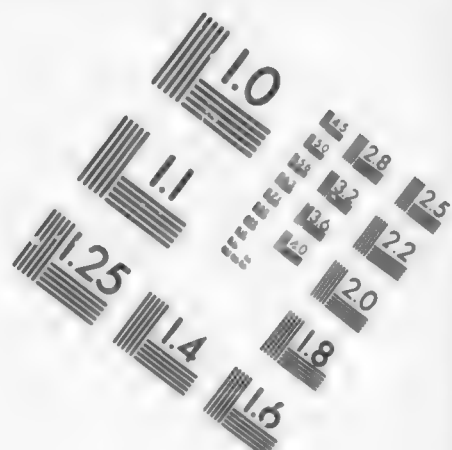
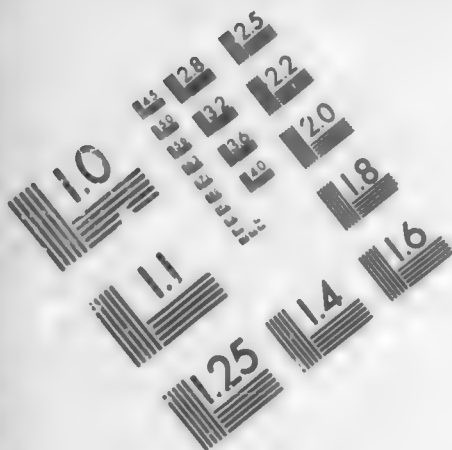
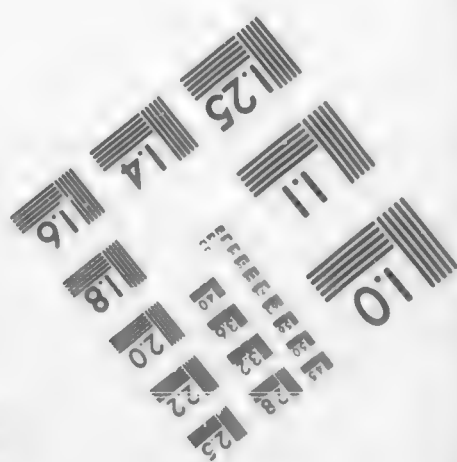
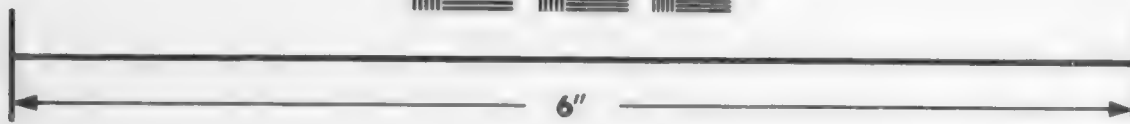
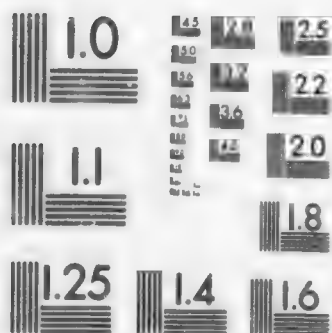


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dinner, "I want some of the fellows to stay here, and get wood and build a camp, and, as you will have to go and settle with Lane, I think you can get along with two fellows; that will be one for each boat. Can't he, Frank?"

"Yes! but don't send me. I have made two trips already."

"I'll go!" cried Robbins. "And I," added Le Roy.

"All right," replied Claude, "I'll find work for the rest of the party."

After Wingate had started to meet Lane, Claude talked with the other fellows to get an idea of how long they wished to stop on the island, and the general opinion was that the party should leave Wednesday morning and move up the river as far as Swan's or the Big Island, and that Tuesday they could go down the river and take a look at Seeboomook Falls.

When the trip was first planned, Claude and Wingate had thought of taking a camera and some dry plates and making negatives of the most striking places on their route. But, when they learned what the camera and plates would weigh, they decided it would be impossible to carry such a load in addition to their stores and baggage through several hundred miles of wilderness. So that project was given up, and the boys concluded to depend on what they could do in the way of sketching, to carry home souvenirs of their trip.

Several of the gentlemen with whom they had talked at the Kineo House had told them that Seeboomook Falls were well worth a visit if they had the time to make it, and, as they had plenty of time at their com-

mand, they concluded to devote one day to an inspection of the falls.

When this decision had been arrived at, Claude set Maynard and St. Clair to building a camp, and Drake and Wood to securing fuel, while he with Foster's help made preparation for supper.

Wingate and his two companions reached the south side of the meadow pond promptly at four o'clock, but they had to wait half an hour before Lane made his appearance.

"Thought you were going to be here at four o'clock," said Wingate, pleasantly, as the driver and sled came in sight.

"Well, I should have been, only my darned old harness broke, and I had to go back to the house and git some spun yarn to mend it with."

"Have you brought everything this time?"

"Yes; not a thing left behind; if there is, I'll give you my head."

"I guess you better keep it," remarked Robbins; "you might feel the need of it."

"And, besides, think how you would frighten people walking around without any head on your shoulders," added Le Roy.

The boys helped unload the sled, and then paid Mr. Lane his six dollars; and that worthy, wishing them "good luck," turned his team, and headed for home.

The freight was then loaded, the three boats launched, and Wingate, taking the lead, started for camp, the others following closely in his wake. It was half past five when they reached the island, and

Dave and Rob came down to the river to help them if necessary.

"Supper most ready?" questioned Le Roy, as he stepped out of the boat.

"Yes," replied Wood, and then added, "I'm blessed if this isn't the hungriest crowd I ever saw. All you think of is eating."

"We'll, that's all you'll think of," retorted Tommy, "after you have been in the woods a few days longer. This pure air in the wilderness gives a fellow an appetite. Why, I eat more at one meal up here in the woods than I do for a whole day at home."

"Hope we shall not get out of provisions, then," laughed Wood; "if we do, such fellows as you will starve."

"Seems to me it is getting hotter, instead of cooler," remarked Wingate, as he went up to camp, lugging a bag that weighed about seventy-five pounds.

"I think so too," replied Claude, "but I don't know that we can help the matter any."

After supper, in the evening, it was arranged that the party should have breakfast the next morning at six o'clock, and that, after things were cleared away, they should start on foot, and go down river as far as they liked, and carry a lunch with them, returning to camp in time to have supper before dark. It was ten o'clock when they retired for the night, and the air was so sultry they could scarcely breathe.

At midnight it commenced to rain, and the wind began rising soon after, and ere long was blowing a gale. It increased until it became a hurricane, and

finally blew down the camp, very little of which, however, fell on the sleepers.

But the noise awoke them, and they found themselves in darkness blacker than coal tar, the rain having extinguished every spark of fire; it was now fast wetting them through, and, altogether, the situation was anything but pleasant.

They cleared themselves of what little débris had fallen on them, and pulled their blankets closer. Suddenly the rain turned to hail, and the hailstones increased from the size of peas until they were nearly as large as hens' eggs, and the boys, pulling the blankets over their heads, turned their faces to the ground, and stood the pelting as best they could; but in two or three cases, where their hands were exposed, they had the skin taken off in places by the hail, which for five minutes came in torrents, and then ceased as suddenly as it had begun.

The air also cooled off rapidly, and soon the entire party, who, on the cessation of the hail, had turned out and dressed, were shivering with cold.

"This will not do," said Claude, "we shall all take cold. Luckily I know where the candles are, and I will light one, and then see if we can't make a fire."

The cook now groped his way to where the stores had been piled, and after a few minutes found a candlestick, three of which were among their stores, and a candle, and, after trying several wet matches, found a dry one, and succeeded in striking a light.

Splitting some wood very fine and using plenty of

birch bark, a liberal supply of which they had on hand, Claude succeeded after a while in starting a fire, which he gradually increased until it threw out a ruddy glow, lighting up the camp perfectly, and sending out a very desirable amount of heat. Around the fire the boys gathered and began the drying-off process, for they were all as wet as water could make them.

Claude put some water on to heat, and, when it had boiled, made some Jamaica ginger tea, and each one of the party took a half-pint of it, which in their condition was the best thing they could have done.

There was no more sleep that night, for it took them till daylight to dry themselves and look after their stores and baggage. Luckily for them, the stores had been well covered up, and none of the food had been wet. Claude had seen enough of camping never to leave anything to chance.

As they gathered at breakfast, except the loss of a little sleep, they were none the worse for the storm, and, now that it had passed, joked each other about their appearance during the night.

"Do you get much of this kind of weather here?" queried Wood, who had really been a little frightened during the storm, for hailstones as large as eggs were a novelty to him.

"Not very often," replied Claude. "That squall probably was the result of two showers meeting."

"It is queer there was no thunder and lightning with it," said Wingate. "It is the only rain squall of that kind that I ever was in without getting a taste of fireworks."

"I hope we won't have another one very soon," added Wood; "this one will do me for all summer."

"It will be a nice day to-day," remarked Maynard. "How sweet and fresh the air is. It will be more comfortable, too, than it has been for the last three or four days."

"Do you think it will be safe, Claude, to leave our things alone all day?" queried Drake, when everybody was ready to start.

"Yes, I don't think anybody will be here to-day. I don't know of any other camping parties in the vicinity, and the flies are so thick there will not be many parties going out this month any way. Then again, most of the parties from Kineo go down river, instead of coming up, so I think we are safe in leaving the camp alone."

"So do I" added St. Clair.

CHAPTER VI.

UP THE NORTH BRANCH.

THE party ferried themselves across to the right side of the river, and then made their way along the bank, stopping occasionally to take a glimpse at the falls. Part of the distance there was a good path, but most of the way the walking was difficult, and it was noon when they reached a point opposite the mouth of Russell Stream.

Claude, Wingate, and Maynard had made sketches at different points on the river, and intended to make others on their way back. The boys had brought a coffee pot with coffee, beside their lunch, and Foster filled the pot with water, and made a fire, while Claude prepared the lunch. This was served on pieces of birch bark, as they had brought no dishes with them except some drinking-cups.

Wood and Drake had brought their rods along with them, against the advice of some of the older members of the party, and, although they had stopped several times on the falls for fishing, neither of them had seen a trout.

They had finished their dinner, and were on the point of starting back, when they heard a deep baying behind them, which continued at intervals, sounding nearer each time.

"By gracious!" said Wingate, "somebody is dogging deer up here. I wish I had my rifle."

"I have my gun," remarked St. Clair, "and if any hound comes in sight of us, he never will run another deer," and Andrew slipped a couple of shells into his piece, that were loaded with buckshot.

"Keep quiet, fellows, and let's see if they come this way," said Claude.

The words were hardly out of his mouth when a deer broke cover, and, passing them but a rod away, took to the water.

"Jerusalem! there's two little ones!" cried Wood, as the two young ones appeared close behind the mother.

"A doe and two fawns, as true as I'm alive," remarked Maynard.

The boys watched them and had the satisfaction of seeing them reach the other side of the river in safety.

Five or six minutes later, a large hound appeared, and the moment he came in sight Andrew fired at him, hitting him in the head, and killing him instantly. He never kicked after he fell.

"You have settled him," said Robbins, as the boys walked up to the dead animal; "he'll never run any more deer to death."

"That's so," added Wood, "but it seems too bad to kill him. He looks like a valuable animal, too."

"So much the better," replied Claude. "If he had run across us, he would have killed the doe and fawns both."

"Yes," remarked Wingate, "it was lucky St. Clair put

an end to him. The Maine Game Laws do not allow hunting deer with dogs, and they'll have to pass such a law in New York State, or there won't be a deer left in the Adirondack region in the next five years."

"I think we had better start up river," suggested Drake. "Probably somebody is following the dog, and, if he finds us here with him, we shall get into a row."

"Quite likely," returned Claude, with a shrug of his shoulders, "but I am never afraid to fight in a good cause, and the law is on our side."

"That is so," put in Maynard, with a nod of acquiescence, "but we may as well start along, and avoid trouble if possible."

The whole party felt that this was a sensible view to take of the matter, and they began retracing their way to camp. They reached their boats without meeting anybody, and at five o'clock were back on the island.

They found their blankets, that had been hung up in the morning, thoroughly dry and, while Foster and Claude busied themselves about the supper, the rest of the party brought fuel, and arranged sleeping quarters.

That night they retired early, enjoyed a good rest in spite of the mosquitoes, and Wednesday morning, after breakfast, they began packing. At eight o'clock the boats were loaded, and they left the island.

As they expected to have to do some wading during the day, each one of the party had dressed with that end in view, and they were prepared to overcome any obstacles in navigation that might rise in their course.

They had good water for the first part of their voyage, and they passed the upper mouth of Nulheilus

Stream in about three-quarters of an hour. This stream flows into the Penobscot from the north, on the right-hand side of the river. Beyond Nulhedus, the crooks and turns in the river increased, and occasionally some very fine views were noticed. In two different places the boys stopped to make sketches, and it was half past ten when they reached Swan's.

They went on shore at this clearing for a few moments, to stretch their legs; taking to their boats again, they found the water grew rapidly shallow, and for half a mile they had a chance, the green ones at least, to take lessons in using a setting-pole.

Alternately poling and wading, and with a good deal of laughing and joking, they reached the head of Gulliver Falls, passing Gulliver Stream on the right, without any accident befalling them.

"Who would have dreamed," said Foster, with a smile, "that, in 'Gulliver's Travels,' the old gentleman came clear up here, in this far-away corner of New England, and had things named for him."

"I suppose he waded down the place we have just come up, and slipped down once or twice, and the roosters with him sang out 'Gulliver falls,'" and Robbins winked at his two companions.

"You ought to have a fall after that," declared Wood.

"If you are all ready, fellows, we'll proceed," and, hearing no dissent, Claude dipped his oar, and the *Petrel* moved on up river.

For two miles and a half, the boys found dead water, then they reached the foot of the Big Island, and, pass-

ing to the right of it, worked their way to the head, and then hauled out their boats and went on shore for dinner.

"I wish we had some trout for dinner," remarked Wood, as he stood surveying the island.

"You can if you choose to catch them," said Claude.

"Are there trout in the river here?" and Wood looked doubtfully into the water.

"No, not just here," replied the leader of the party; "but you take one of the boats, and go up the river a few rods on the left side, and you will find the mouth of a logon. Follow this until you come to a pool encircled by lily-pads, and, unless the guidebook lies, you will find some small trout. I don't suppose you'll take many, however, as it is a bad hour in the day for fishing."

"I am willing to take my chances," replied Wood, as he started for his rod.

"Do you want company?" inquired Drake.

"Certainly."

"Then I'll go with you. I had rather try some fishing than sit round here doing nothing."

"Don't be gone over an hour," sang out Claude, as the boys pushed off, "for dinner will be ready by that time."

"Where are we going to stop to-night, Claude?" inquired Wingate, when the fishermen had gone.

"I think Knight's farm will be a good place, and we can probably get some supplies there. We need more eggs, and that will be the last chance we shall have to get any for the Lord knows how long. I am sure I don't."

"How about Canada Falls?" remarked Maynard.
"The guidebook says they're worth looking at."

"We can go and see what they look like to-morrow."

"How far are they from the Forks?" asked Win-gate.

"It's a mile and a half to the foot of the falls, and they stretch along the river for some distance."

"Can we go in the boats?" interrogated Robbins.

"We can with a great deal of trouble. My idea is to make a pedestrian excursion of it, going over the old Canada road."

"I go in for that," said Foster; "we shall get boating enough before the trip is over."

At the end of the hour, Wood and Drake returned with about thirty small trout, averaging in weight from a quarter to a half pound each. Some of the boys dressed them, and Claude and Foster cooked the entire catch for dinner.

"That is a mean hole," remarked Drake, while the party were eating dinner. "There are a thousand flies for every fish."

"Say ten thousand," added Wood, "and you'll get nearer the truth."

"Draw it mild, Dave," said St. Clair.

"If you don't believe it, go and see. You'll be convinced then."

After dinner was over, the boys passed an hour in chatting, and then started for the Forks. At some ledges near King's High Landing, almost a mile from the island, they stopped a couple of hours for fishing, all hands indulging in the sport, and they captured

seventy-six trout, some of which were of very good size. About five o'clock they reached the Forks, and, turning into the North Branch, ascended it a few rods, and then drew out their boats on the north side, and camped.

The next morning, after breakfast, the whole party went over to Knight's farm, and, catching him at home, Wingate succeeded in buying a dozen chickens, a very small lamb, and six dozen eggs. Finding they could get some milk, also, they bought six quarts, borrowing a pail at the farm, to carry it to camp in, which they promised to return the next day.

They had been very saving of their canned meats, as they were likely to run short of provisions after leaving Knight's, unless they had unusually good luck in fishing. Later on, when shooting came, they could do better for their larder.

As the farmer was disposed to be talkative, they asked him a great many questions about their proposed route, he having been up the North Branch as far as Abacotnetic Bog. The St. John waters he had not been on, but he knew considerable of them from hearsay, and gave them all the information in his power.

It was one o'clock when they reached camp, and, as it was nearly three when dinner was over, they gave up the excursion to Canada Falls until the next day.

Thursday morning, after breakfast, they took some lunch, and started over the road for Canada Falls, intending to make a day of it. Four or five of the party carried sketch-books, and two, fire-arms, not that they expected to see anything to shoot, but because they did

not know what might turn up before the day was over.

Nothing unusual happened during the forenoon, but in the middle of the afternoon, while they were making their way back to where they had left their boats after crossing the river, Maynard suddenly lost his footing when close to the bank, and fell some ten feet into the boiling current.

The river here runs through a succession of deep, narrow gorges, and Claude and Wingate, who saw him fall, never expected to see him again alive, for it did not seem possible that any human being could go through that angry whirl of waters and escape.

But, through one of those miraculous interventions of Providence, Maynard, after being carried down a few rods, was washed against the trunk of a tree that had fallen from above, one end of which still lay on the ledge, and, before his friends reached him, he was able to crawl out and get to the top of the ledge.

He had no limbs broken, but he was pretty badly shaken up, bruised and scarred some, and badly frightened, after the excitement was gone. Claude and Wingate reached him first, and they not only hugged but kissed him, they were so rejoiced to find he was not seriously injured.

"By Jove, Frank!" exclaimed Claude, "I could not have felt any worse if I had gone in there myself, for I never expected to see you again alive, and a doubt even passed through my mind as to whether we should find your body."

"I tell you what it is, fellows, I have reason to be

thankful. I thought I was a pretty good swimmer, but I had no more power in that water than if I had been a baby."

The rest of the party now came up, some of whom did not know of the accident until that moment, and sincere and hearty were the congratulations offered Frank on his wonderful escape from a frightful death.

"A fellow who is born to be hanged will not be drowned," said Frank, trying to laugh a little.

The party now kept together until they reached the boats, and, as soon as they arrived at camp, Frank took off his wet clothing, and Claude, giving him a dose of Jamaica ginger, coaxed him to lie down for the rest of the evening.

Friday morning, Maynard said that he was all right, but at the same time acknowledged that he did not feel like exerting himself any, and it was decided to remain where they were for the day.

Saturday morning, Maynard thought he was able to travel again, and, after the party had consulted maps and guidebooks, Claude concluded that they would try and get as far as the foot of Leadbetter Falls, and remain there until Monday morning, which they did. The navigation between the Forks and the falls was very bad, and they had to do a good deal of wading and dragging; so, although they had only made four miles, they were not sorry to stop when they reached the falls.

Sunday was spent quietly in camp, the entire party writing letters home, as this would be the last chance they expected to have for many a long day.

Monday morning, Claude and Wingate took the letters and started in the *Swallow* for Knight's farm, the man there having agreed to take their letters to Lane's, for a consideration in cash, the next morning; and he promised Claude he would have Lane send them down the lake the first opportunity.

It was half past twelve when the boys returned to camp; and Foster and St. Clair, who were cook and assistant for that week, had dinner all ready.

As they wished to make Dole Brook on the next start, they concluded not to break camp until the following morning, and the afternoon was spent by each member of the party as best suited him. Before night Claude and St. Clair went up the bank of the river, and looked the falls over, and concluded that at the present stage of the water it would be better and safer to make the carry, as it was short, rather than attempt to get the boats up on the river.

Accordingly, Tuesday morning, they had breakfast at six o'clock; and, as soon as it was over, they began the transportation of their things across the carry. The boats were taken first, next the stores, and lastly the baggage; and it was dinner-time when the last article was dropped at the head of the falls.

"I am glad that job is over," said Claude, dropping his load; "and now for dinner. Come, Foster, stir your stumps, and give us something to eat."

"Keep cool, Claude, and let your hair grow for about fifteen minutes, and we will be ready for you."

"I suppose we have left the last house behind us, now," remarked Le Roy, alluding to Knight's shanty.

"Yes," answered Claude, "we shall see nothing now but some old lumber camp, until we get pretty well down the St. John River. I doubt if we see a person either, beside the members of this party, for the next two months."

"Won't be crowded for elbow room," added Robbins.

After dinner, the boats were loaded, and navigation was resumed. As they ascended the river, fine views of the Green Mountains were had from time to time, and the artists in the party occasionally came on some bit of the landscape that they transferred to their sketch-books. As they went on, the river grew narrower, and the soft-wood ridges that were close to them gave way to a more open country, that was, for the most part, covered with a hard-wood growth. The bed of the river also changed from small bowlders and rocks to sand and gravel.

About four o'clock they reached an island some half-mile long, and, taking the left-hand channel, which looked the most promising, they passed the island, and a mile above reached the Forks and Dole Brook.

"It strikes me," said Wood, who had been silent for some time, "that forks are more plenty in this country than knives."

"How long have you been thinking of that, Wood?" inquired Drake, laughing.

"Don't have to think up my jokes the way you do," retorted Dave.

"Spontaneous combustion, isn't it, Dave?" queried Le Roy with a laugh.

A camp site was selected at the mouth of the North-

east Branch, up which their course lay next, and the boats were unloaded.

When everything had been taken from the boats, Wood and Drake launched the *Daisy* and dropped down river a short distance, to a pool they had noticed coming up, and in an hour's fishing secured trout enough for the whole party's supper.

They brought back such glowing accounts of their sport that, the next morning, Robbins, Claude, Wingate, Drake, and Wood went down to the pool in the *Swallow* and *Daisy*, and took fifty pounds of trout before they became tired of fishing.

As Tuesday's trip had been quite a hard one, they passed Wednesday where they were, and Thursday morning resumed the ascent of the river, going as far as Norris Brook and the Northwest Branch, where they camped again, near the end of the tote road, that runs to Truesdell Pond.

Although they had made only three miles, it had been very difficult, and they did not care to push on farther that day. In the afternoon, Maynard, Robbins, and St. Clair, taking their fire-arms, walked over to the pond, and, while there, ran across a bear; the first one they had seen. He took them by surprise, and, although they all fired, they did not kill him, but the ground where the animal stood was spotted with blood, showing that some of the party had made a telling shot.

When they returned to camp, Maynard related the story, and Wood was so excited over it that he wanted to take his rifle and start after the bear at once.

"That bear is probably five or six miles from where the boys saw him when they fired," said Claude, "so I guess you will have to let him go, Dave."

"I have been thinking over the route from here to Baker Lake," remarked Claude, as the party sat around the smudge after supper, "and, from what the men below told us, and what the guidebooks say, I think the next three or four days will be hard ones."

"Which way shall we go to Baker Lake, Claude? By the way of the Bog, or St. John Pond?"

"By the way of the Bog by all means, Charlie. It is not more than half as far that way, and just as good water probably."

"When we get to Baker Lake, I move that we stay there a few days. There ought to be good fishing in the vicinity, as few people go there, and if we can run across a buck deer I say shoot him, if it is the close season, on the plea of necessity, for our provisions will be running out soon," said Robbins.

"Potatoes are all gone now," remarked Foster.

"We shall not have them to lug over the next carry, then; that is one consolation," added Wood.

Friday morning they left Norris Brook Camp, expecting to be at Baker Lake by Saturday night, but it was not until the following Wednesday night that their eyes were gladdened by that sheet of water, which looked delightful to them, after the bogs, swamps, and low ground that they had literally fought their way through for the past six days, the flies nearly eating them up.

A heavy shower had half drowned them, beside wetting some of their stores, while crossing the carry from

Abacotnetic Bog to Baker Bog Stream, and they were completely tired out and not a little disgusted with the country they had lately passed over when they finally reached Baker Lake.

"There, that looks like God's country again," remarked Le Roy, as they pulled out on the upper end of the lake, and, swinging to the right, soon found a desirable camping spot.

It was five o'clock when the boats were unloaded, and every one was quite tired enough to turn in, but supper kept them up. But there was very little talking done after the evening meal that night, and by half past eight everybody had laid down and was fast asleep.

CHAPTER VII.

CAMPING AT BAKER LAKE.

THURSDAY morning it was after eight o'clock before the party had breakfast, all being so tired out the night before that no one thought of rising until he felt like it.

While eating, it was decided to spend about two weeks at Baker Lake, and during that time to cruise about wherever there was a prospect for sport.

"As we are going to stop here so long," remarked St. Clair, "we ought to build a decent camp, and I suggest we do it the first thing."

"All right," replied Claude, cheerfully, "we are under your orders, and I am ready, for one, to go to work."

"Then, we will begin immediately. We can find no better location than this, as the prospect from here is fine, and the site commands nearly the whole view of the lake."

Just then, Foster, who had finished his breakfast, and who was walking down to the boats, suddenly stopped, and looked fixedly at something in the water, that was swimming for the other side of the lake.

The object was perhaps a half a mile below the camp, and but a few rods from the shore; it was, however, fast increasing the distance.



CAMPING AT BAKER LAKE.

"Well, I'm blessed! if that isn't a bear, it looks uncommonly like one," said the young man to himself, and then calling to his friends, "I say, fellows! there's a bear swimming across the lake!"

"Where? where?" shouted four or five voices excitedly.

"There, down the lake, about a half a mile away. Don't you see!" and he pointed in the direction of the swimming animal.

The party, who by that time had all finished breakfast, were on their feet in an instant, and each one caught up his rifle or gun and hastily rushed to the boats. Dish-washing, camp-building, and everything else in the way of work was forgotten for the time being.

Each crew took its own boat, and the *Petrel* was first in the water, and headed for Bruin, her crew determined to catch the animal if possible.

The *Swallow* was next launched, and the crew jumped into her; and the force of their movements sent the boat out a short distance from the shore, and, before the fellows sat down, the crew of the *Daisy* pushed off in such haste that she struck the *Swallow* amidship, causing Le Roy, Wingate, and Maynard to lose their balance, and sit down in a very different manner from what they had intended to, overturning the boat when they fell.

As the crew went into the lake, Maynard caught at the gunwale of the *Daisy*, also overturning her, and, in less time than it has taken to write it, both boats' crews were floundering in the water, while everything that had been in the boats, that would not float, was at the

bottom of the lake. But they were so near shore that the water was only between five and six feet deep.

As the coxswain of the *Petrel* was facing the bear, and both the oarsmen were looking over their shoulders at the animal, the boat had gone nearly a hundred rods before Claude, turning his head and looking to see where the other boats were, saw, to his surprise and amazement, that they were both upset, and the crews struggling in the water.

"Swing around for the camp, Foster. There's some kind of a circus with the other boats; they are both capsized. Pull hard, Drake, and I'll back water. Let us get there quickly and see what the trouble is."

His two companions, while doing as he requested, had stolen a look inshore, and were as much surprised as Claude at what they saw.

"What can those fellows be about?" said Foster. "You don't suppose they had a fight?"

"Fight? Nonsense!" exclaimed Claude; "there isn't a fellow in the party, I hope, who would lose his temper to that extent. You can look for a better explanation than that."

The shipwrecked crews, in the meantime, had taken their boats far enough inshore so that some of the fellows could stand on bottom, and turn the boats over, then they floated them to the sand, and one after another, after picking up what things were floating about, stepped dripping out on the beach.

"What is the matter here? Are any of you crazy?" sang out Claude, as the *Petrel* neared the shore.

"I don't wonder you ask such a question," replied

Wingate. "The *Daisy* collided with us in launching, and both boats were capsized in a moment. But don't bother with us. We are all right. Go for the bear, or you'll lose him."

"We'll see you later, then," observed Claude, and the *Patrol* dashed away again after Bruin, who was now more than half-way across the lake.

After the Swallows and the *Daisies* had emptied the water out of their boats, they turned their attention to recovering their fire arms, and several other articles, that, as Wood jocosely remarked, "were just buoyant enough to sink."

This kept every fellow in the two crews busy until noon, and then they went to camp, and put on dry clothing, and, wringing the water out of that they had shed, hung the garments up to dry.

"I declare, I don't see where those fellows are," remarked St. Clair, as they began getting dinner.

"Nor I," answered Robbins. "They not only landed on the other side of the lake, but must have chased that bear a long distance into the woods. And if they fired at him, I did not hear any report."

"They have nothing to eat with them, so I think they'll be back by the time dinner is ready." And St. Clair continued to busy himself in its preparation. As there was no probability of its being ready for an hour, the other four fellows busied themselves in getting material for the camp.

When dinner was all ready but dishing-up, St. Clair cast a long, searching glance across the lake, but no boat appeared in sight, and he began to feel a little worried.

"I declare, I don't understand why those fellows are not back here. It seems to me that they must be in trouble of some kind." And the cook glanced uneasily at his assistant.

"I did not suppose they would be away all the forenoon," remarked Robbins; "but they may have found the trail of a deer or moose, and let the bear slide, and followed the other animal. I'll tell you what we'll do, Andrew. If they are not here when dinner is over and the dishes washed, we'll row across the lake, find out where they landed, and see if we can find them."

"All right, and now call the fellows to dinner."

Robbins performed this duty by sending forth a war whoop that would have done credit to a New York milkman, and in a few moments the boys appeared.

While they ate dinner the absence of their friends was freely commented on, and caused a little anxiety; but no one doubted but they would put in an appearance by night.

As soon as the cook and his assistant had finished their work, they started in the *Swallow* for the other side of the lake, and, after skirting the shore for half a mile, discovered the *Petrel* drawn up on the beach, and, swinging towards it, ran ashore and pulled theirs up beside it.

Glancing around, they saw where the bear had left the water and taken to the woods, and they started slowly on the trail.

It led up over a knoll covered with a mixed growth, then across a little valley, beyond which the ground was

dotted with large bowlders and dead stumps, showing that at some time fire had swept across it.

Clearing the piece of bowlders, they suddenly heard voices beyond them, and, stopping for a moment, they listened. They heard them again distinctly, and St. Clair called out, "Claude!"

"Hulloa!" came back from a point a little to the left of the direction in which they were heading.

"That you, Claude?"

"You can bet it is, Andrew," and in another moment the two parties met, and a general hand-shaking ensued.

"Why in sixty didn't you come back at dinner time?" queried Robbins.

"Because we hoped not to come back empty-handed," answered Claude.

"Well, what have you seen or shot?" inquired St. Clair, as the party began retracing their steps towards the lake.

"Shot nothing," replied Claude. "We had a glimpse of the bear when he took to the woods, and that was the last we saw of him. We followed his trail a couple of miles perhaps, then came to deer droppings and plenty of tracks, and, selecting what appeared the freshest, we followed on the trail until we became tired and confounded hungry, and then turned for the lake, and, when you met us, were making the best time we could for it."

"That is rather a tame story," said Robbins.

"True, nevertheless, George. You can't expect to have startling adventures every day. And it's lucky we don't. It would work our nervous system too hard."

"How did you lubbers tip over your boats?" inquired Foster.

St. Clair laughed.

"That was the queerest thing I ever saw." And Andrew told the story to a finish just as they reached the beach.

Launching their swift craft, they were soon at the camp, and St. Clair and Robbins began preparations for supper, while the crew of the *Petrel*, who declared they were not too tired to work, joined the rest of the party, who were back in the woods, a short distance, getting the material for the camp together.

Friday and Saturday were passed in working on the camp, and Saturday night saw it completed, as well as a small store-room, to the entire satisfaction of the whole party. St. Clair's time as cook ended Saturday night, and Robbins took his place, while Maynard became Robbins' assistant.

"Here is the last of the beans, and the meat is most gone," said Robbins, as he served up the breakfast Sunday morning. "We shall have to bestir ourselves in the way of fishing and hunting next week, or we shall wake up some morning and find we shall have to suck our thumbs for breakfast."

"Ever try that, George?" inquired Foster, smiling.

"No, and I hope I shall not be compelled to this trip at least."

"We'll see what can be done to-morrow," remarked Claude, "but as to-day is Sunday I am going to spend it in sketching."

Several others announced their intention of doing the

same thing, while Wingate, who was keeping a diary, announced his intention of writing it up.

"Don't get too much potash in it," advised Foster, and the boys smiled at this caustic remark.

"One thing I want you fellows to understand," said Robbins, as the party arose from the table, "and that is there will be only two meals to-day. It's ten o'clock now, and we shall have dinner at four o'clock, and if any fellow gets hungry before then he can go to the cupboard."

"Where will he find it?" queried Wood.

"I'll tell you some other time, when I am not so busy," and the cook began clearing the table.

"Who would like to take a row down the lake with me?" queried Le Roy, gazing around him.

"I would," said St. Clair. "And I," added Drake.

"All right; we'll go in the *Swallow*."

Taking their fire-arms and ammunition, they launched the boat, Le Roy acting as coxswain, while St. Clair and Drake rowed.

In hope of seeing something to shoot, they skirted the northern shore, following it quite closely, until they reached the outlet. Passing it, without going into the river, they continued on up the south shore. Half a mile from the foot of the lake they passed the mouth of a small brook, and a short distance beyond came to a point which extended for quite a distance into the lake, and upon this they landed. After hauling their boat up carefully, they took their fire-arms and started back into the woods, Le Roy, who had a compass, going ahead.

After proceeding a short distance, St. Clair proposed that they should bear a little more to the north, strike the brook whose mouth they had passed, and follow it up for a while and see what it looked like.

His companions readily fell in with his suggestion, as they had nothing better to offer, and, swinging to the right, fifteen minutes' walk brought them to the bank of the stream, some twenty feet wide at that point. Turning to the left, they began following it up. Both hard and soft timber grew along the water-course, and some of the old-growth trees attracted the attention of the boys, on account of their size and beauty.

"My stars! Isn't this a splendid forest!" exclaimed Le Roy, as they stood before a yellow birch, which was some three feet or more in diameter, and which ran up as straight as the side of a house for seventy-five feet before it put out a limb.

"It's magnificent," replied St. Clair, "and there is not a great deal of underbrush about here either."

Continuing on up the brook for half a mile farther, the sound of falling water came to their ears, and soon after they were surprised to see a dam, almost four feet high, across the stream.

"There's a dam," said Drake, "and it's a peculiar-looking one, too."

"You must not talk about dams to-day. It's Sunday," remarked St. Clair.

"You don't say!" replied Drake. "But I don't understand what a dam is built 'way up here on this little stream for."

"I can tell you," said Le Roy, "it's to hold the water back."

"Wise youth," and Drake gave his friend a punch in the ribs.

St. Clair, who had been eying the dam very carefully from their first sight of it, now noticed on the opposite side of the stream, above the dam, an object that looked somewhat like the top of a haystack, and the thought suddenly flashed through his mind that they had discovered a beaver dam and house.

"Great snakes, fellows!" he exclaimed, stopping a moment in his excitement. "I'll bet a hundred dollars that beavers have been at work here."

"Bet your small change first, Andrew," advised Drake, laughing.

"Now, fellows, move carefully, and don't talk any," whispered St. Clair, "and if there are any beavers here now, we may get a sight of one. I'd give a dollar, in a moment, to see one."

"So would I," added Le Roy, as they made a silent approach toward the structure, keeping back, at the same time, a little farther from the stream.

Fifteen minutes' careful work brought them just below the dam, and here the banks of the stream were high, and, securing a spot from which they could look down on the stream, the dam, and the lodge, they sat down to await developments.

They noticed that the dam made quite a pond, the whole of which, in fact, they could not see, as up the stream, a short distance, the land fell almost back to a level, and a sharp turn in the brook concealed the head of the pond.

They were much interested in the structure of the dam, and determined to get a nearer view of it before they returned to camp. From where they sat, however, they could see that it was composed of small trees, limbs, grass, mud, and other material.

When they had been watching about ten minutes, they were gratified by the sight of a beaver, coming to the surface of the water, probably from the lodge; the animal swam to the top of the dam, and climbed out on it.

The boys watched the creature eagerly, and soon it was joined by another, and another, until finally there were seven on the dam. Five of them, however, the boys noticed, were smaller than the others, and St. Clair, who had read considerable about them, said it was a family, old and young.

The beavers did not stay on the dam long, but disappeared in the woods on their side of the stream, and then the boys went down to examine the dam.

It was about forty-five feet long, and seemed very solidly put together. Some of the limbs used in its construction were six inches in diameter, and, although the pieces were of all lengths, the dam was perfectly tight, up to within a few inches of the top.

"By gracious! one wouldn't suppose it possible that those animals could do such a piece of work as that," exclaimed Drake, as, wading across the bed of the stream, which was plentifully sprinkled with large stones, they examined critically the structure of the dam.

On the opposite side of the brook, they went as near

the lodge as they could, it being about eight feet from the shore, and took a good look at it.

"There is some of the beaver's mason work," said St. Clair, pointing to the top of the lodge, that had been finished quite smooth; "they do that with their tails."

"It looks as if it was made of mud, grass, and small twigs, plastered together," said Drake.

"So it is," replied St. Clair. "But let us follow the stream up a little way, and see how long this pond is."

About a hundred yards brought them to the bend of the stream, and they found the slack water extended about an eighth of a mile beyond. During this halt they saw where the beavers had been at work on the trees, and each of the boys obtained some chips and cuttings to carry back to camp, to show their friends.

After a few minutes' stay here, they returned to the dam; but, although they waited there some ten or fifteen minutes, the beavers did not appear, and St. Clair thought they were away after food.

The boys crossed the stream a little farther away from the dam this time, and, after stepping on shore, turned, and watched the beaver dam and lodge for a few moments, but nothing came in sight.

"The other fellows must come over here with us, and see this dam and beaver house," said Le Roy, as they started toward the lake.

"That's so," added St. Clair. "I want to come again myself, and next Sunday we can all make an excursion up here."

"If there was any way of getting one of those skins

home with him," remarked Drake, "a fellow might have a plug hat from his own beaver."

"You'd be a pretty-looking peep in a plug hat, Rob," said Le Roy, slapping his friend on the shoulder.

"Would I? What's the matter with my head, I'd like to know?"

"Empty," replied St. Clair, quickly, with a chuckle.

"What time is it, Andrew? I left my watch at camp."

"Two-thirty, Tommy. We've an hour and a half before dinner."

"That is time enough to get to camp," said Drake.

As they were turning away from the river, they came suddenly in sight of a deer, a large buck, that was evidently heading for the stream, and which was not more than four rods from them.

Both parties stopped, as if they had been shot, but the buck recovered the use of his senses first, and, wheeling around, disappeared in the opposite direction, the boys all managing to get in a shot at him at long range, which only served to frighten him more.

"Thunder and Mars! if that isn't too provoking!" cried St. Clair. "There's seventy-five to a hundred pounds of good meat gone to grass."

"We fellows better all kick each other, and see if we can't get woke up," suggested Le Roy.

"No, thanks," said Drake; "I can get along without it. But there is nothing mean about me, and, if you and Andrew wish to be kicked, I shall be happy to do it."

"Well, the idea of three of us firing at that buck and missing him."

"The only trouble was, we didn't fire quick enough, Tommy."

"By gracious! don't say anything about this at camp. The fellows will make game of us."

"That's more than we did of the deer, Andrew; however, I will keep quiet, if you say so," and Drake winked at his vexed friend in a way that was exasperating.

"Partridges are not very thick around here," said Drake. "I haven't seen one to-day."

"They are not of any size to shoot, if we do see them," replied Le Roy. "The law hits the nail on the head in regard to partridges. It does not allow them to be shot until the 1st of September, and nobody but a jackass would shoot them before that time, as they are not large enough."

"If I should meet one the last day of August, I think I should shoot it," remarked Drake.

"Shoot at it, you mean," added St. Clair, laughing.

When the boys reached camp they found dinner all ready, and the rest of their friends impatiently awaiting their arrival.

"Now, where have you been and what have you discovered?" asked Claude when all were at the table.

"Answer him, Tommy," said St. Clair, "I'm too hungry."

"In the first place," began Le Roy, "we pulled down the lake to the outlet, passing it without stopping, and began to retrace our way along the south shore. We

soon came to a small brook, and beyond it quite a point, and on this we landed."

"I see," said Claude, archly, "you made it a point to land there."

"Not by a long chalk," winked the narrator; "the point was made before ever such fellows as you, with your cheap jokes, were thought of."

"Take a back seat, Claude," cried Maynard, laughing.

"I guess I shall have to," good-naturedly acknowledged the leader of the party. "Tommy is wide awake to-day."

"If the flies had bit you the way they have me, you'd be wide awake. But no matter; as I said before, we landed on the point."

"Then that point is settled," put in Claude, who thought he'd try it the second time. But Tommy was on deck again, and replied sharply.

"Settled, you lunk head? No, it isn't settled. There is not a habitation of any kind nor was there a single person around there beside ourselves."

"Has you again," laughed Maynard.

"Are you fellows going to fight on that point all day?" queried Robbins. "Go on with your story, Tommy."

"Yes, do stray from that point," added Foster.

Le Roy shied a piece of hardtack at the Californian's head, which Foster neatly dodged and then continued his story, —

"We left the point —"

"I'm glad you didn't take it with you," chuckled

Wingate, and at this there was an explosion all around the table.

When the laughter was over, in which Le Roy could not help joining, for mirth is contagious, he said : —

“ Now, look here, fellows, a joke is a joke. But cut me up into shoestrings if I tell you another word, unless you will keep silent. Can you swallow that ? ”

“ I will assert my authority, Tommy,” remarked Robbins, “ and be responsible for the good behavior of the company. Now, gentlemen, silence ! Mr. Le Roy has the floor.”

Tommy, looking at his friends a little doubtfully, began : —

“ We travelled in the woods some distance, and then bore to the right until we struck the brook I spoke of before, and, following it up a mile or so, came in sight of a dam.”

“ Very unusual sight,” interrupted Foster.

“ You are right, Billy, for it was a beaver dam.”

“ A beaver dam ? ” cried several.

“ Yes,” replied Le Roy, “ and we saw seven beavers.”

“ Jerusalem ! ” cried Maynard, “ I wish I had been with you.”

“ So do I,” echoed Claude.

“ Did you get a shot at them ? ” inquired Wood.

“ No, sir. We thought if we fired at them we should frighten them, and, thinking you would all like to see them, we were very careful how we worked around there

“ That was very considerate in you, Tommy,” re-

marked Claude, "and we will all go and take a look at them some day."

"They have a house there, too," added St. Clair.

"Yes, and the dam is a wonderful piece of work." And Le Roy went on to describe the dam and house at some length.

When he had finished, those of the party who had not been to the beaver dam announced their intention of visiting it the next Sunday, and the evening was pleasantly passed in the discussion of beavers and their habits, each one telling the others what he had read on the subject, and it was ten o'clock when they retired for the night.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BATTLE WITH WOLVES.

ABOUT midnight Claude awoke from the noise made by some animal coming into the camp; but, before he could call the others, a number of dark bodies came bounding along in front of the cabin, apparently in pursuit of the other animal, which had dashed in among the sleepers and taken refuge in the farther corner of the camp.

The fire had burned so low that it gave only the faintest flicker of light, and, while Claude was wondering what manner of wild beasts was gathered around the doorway, a peculiar barking and snarling among them settled the question in his mind very quickly, and he jumped to the conclusion that they were wolves. This gave him such a start that for a moment he was faint, but, rising above this cowardly feeling, he jumped to his feet, shouting, "Awake, fellows! to arms! we are besieged by wolves."

He knew just where his Winchester rifle hung, and he made a dash for it, the other boys jumping for their arms almost as quickly.

"For Heaven's sake, fellows, be careful and not shoot each other," said the leader, as the different members

of the party, wild with excitement, grasped their guns and rifles and turned toward the doorway.

The wolves had apparently stopped for a moment to consider the situation, for the gray wolf is a very cunning animal, but at the end of that moment the boys had opened fire on them, which, at such short range, had done fearful execution. For, as dark as it was, the boys could see a cleared space where a moment before was a moving mass.

"We've settled their hash," cried Foster, after the first volley had been fired. But he had begun bragging too quick, for the next moment, with bloodthirsty howls, the maddened wolves dashed through the doorway, and, although some of the boys shot a few more, it seemed in a second to the affrighted boys that the camp was full of the savage beasts.

"Don't shoot any more! Some of us will get hurt! Club your guns and rifles, or use your knives if you can get at them."

There was no chance for Claude to say anything more, for the next moment he and every other member of the party were fighting for their lives.

The confusion was frightful. Boys and wolves mixed together in every way. As fast as one wolf was knocked down or despatched another took his place. A half-dozen different combats were going on, in which numbers predominated sometimes on the part of those assailed, but more frequently on the part of the assailants. In five minutes every member of the party was more or less wounded, and it looked as if the boys would certainly get the worst of it, when Claude, who

saw the doorway was a little clear, made a rush for the outside of the cabin, shouting as he did so, "Get outdoors, fellows, if you can."

He succeeded in getting out himself, and was followed by three wolves, which he shot in as many seconds, as he had fired only twice while indoors.

Wingate and Maynard were also enabled to fight their way out, and four wolves pursued them, which the young fellows quickly despatched.

As the other boys did not come out, the three outside dashed in again to their relief, and found their six companions fighting valiantly.

In the semi-darkness Claude saw Robbins battling with two of the brutes, and, putting the muzzle of his rifle on one of them, he blew a hole clear through him, nearly an inch in diameter. At the same time, George, who had been lucky enough to secure his knife when the fight commenced, plunged it to the hilt in the other animal, and he dropped to the floor.

Wingate and Maynard had aided their struggling friends so well that all the wolves but two were killed inside, and these beat a hasty retreat, but, before they could gain the shelter of the forest they were shot by Wingate and Maynard, who rushed out after them.

"Is every one alive?" inquired Claude, when silence took the place of the somewhat noisy combat.

"I am!" "I am!" "I am!" exclaimed one after another, until all had been heard from.

"Then, Wingate and Maynard, start a fire, and, Claude, light a candle," ordered Robbins.

It took some time to find the candles, but finally two

of them were lighted, and the seven fellows in the camp looked around them.

A cry of astonishment burst from the lips of each as they saw one another distinctly, for there was not one of the seven but showed bloody marks of the fight, while the wolves lay in every direction, three of which were yet alive, and, under the rays of the candles, began struggling to their feet. They were immediately shot, however.

At the sound of the reports, Wingate and Maynard rushed in to see what the trouble was, and, as they caught sight of their friends, Wingate cried:—

“What is the matter now?”

“Only took what fight there was left out of three wounded wolves that were trying to get on their pins again,” answered Claude. Then he continued with a smile, “You and Maynard look as if you had been having a prize fight.”

“Do we?” said Maynard. “I can return the compliment. A more ferocious-looking set of brigands I never saw. Every one of you is marked with blood.”

“Great guns! what is that in the corner?” inquired Wingate, pointing to one corner of the cabin.

The boys turned and looked where he pointed, and there, close against the wall, crouched an animal, which the boys saw was a deer.

“It’s a doe!” cried Claude. “The wolves were chasing her, and she ran in here to escape them. We have saved her life, but we came mighty near losing our own in the attempt.”

The poor animal looked frightened to death, and

trembled in every limb ; its eyes were fixed on the boys with a pitiful expression, as if imploring their mercy.

Taking a little salt from a bag, Claude went up to the doe, which shrank closer to the wall on his approach. When within reach, he held out the hand that contained the salt. The doe smelled of it for a moment, then began lapping it, and, after she ate it, Claude patted her, and stroked her head a little, and she soon recovered from her fright ; the boys concluded to let her stay where she was for the rest of the night, and in half an hour she lay down, apparently contented.

Wingate and Maynard went back to attend to the fire, while the rest of the party began dragging the dead wolves outdoors. They counted them as they took them out, and found thirteen. By this time the fire was sending up a cheerful blaze, lighting up the ground for some way around them, and sending a glimmer far out across the silent waters of the lake.

Seven wolves were found to have been killed by the first fire, making in all, with those afterward shot outdoors, twenty-nine, and the whole pack had been exterminated.

The party now began to turn their attention to their wounds, none of which were serious, although some were of a painful nature, and would be likely to cause trouble for several days.

After washing the blood off themselves, court-plaster and salves were applied to the wounds, each of the boys helping the others where help was needed, and by two o'clock they were all feeling better.

A few of the party slept with the most of their cloth-

ing on, some with only a shirt and drawers, and others in night shirts. Those who had on the least clothing had fared the worst, their legs being badly scratched and torn, while their bodies had not escaped the wolves' claws by any means.

The clothing of those who were partially or wholly dressed had fared badly, however, some of it being literally torn to tatters and most of it past mending.

That the entire party had escaped with so little bodily injury seemed almost a miracle, but each one of the boys felt that Providence had watched over them and enabled them to make a successful struggle. That "the Lord helps those who help themselves" had been clearly exemplified in their case, and silent prayers of thankfulness were sent up to the Power over all, by every one of the party.

"What are we going to do with this carrion?" asked Foster, contemptuously, kicking one of the wolves with his feet.

"I know what I am going to do with one of them," answered Robbins, "and that is cook him. There is not a bit of meat left in camp, and I think wolf steak would go better than nothing."

"I'll be hanged if I'll eat it," said Drake, with a look of disgust on his face.

"Do as you please," returned the cook. "I am going to try it myself, whether anybody else does or not."

"We shall have to get rid of these bodies when daylight comes, or they'll soon begin to smell loud," said Maynard.

"Throw them into the lake," suggested Wood.

"Bury them," advised St. Clair.

"Take them in the boats down to the foot of the lake, and sluice them down river," said Le Roy.

"I think I have a better plan than any proposed," remarked Claude.

"What is it?" cried several.

"I think the best plan is to burn them. We can make a big pile of dry limbs and brush, then pile them on it, and roast them. If the fire does not burn them all up it will leave them so they will not smell bad. We can light the fire at night, and it will keep the mosquitoes away."

"We can have some fun out of it, anyhow," declared Drake.

"I am going to turn in again," said Maynard. "I don't believe we shall see any more live wolves to-night."

"Nor any other night," added Claude. "This is probably some stray pack that came down from the Canadian wilderness, and I think we have been lucky enough to exterminate them."

"I agree with you, Claude. I think wolves are a mighty scarce animal in Maine. But, as I said before, I am going to turn in." And Maynard, after piling a lot more wood on the fire, went in and lay down, and his example was followed by the others.

Daylight was breaking in the east before the boys were asleep again, and the result was a late breakfast.

After the meal was over, and the dishes cleared up,

Robbins looked the wolves over and picked out the fattest one he could find, which was not saying much for the wolf, and proceeded to skin him and cut him up, being assisted by Maynard, who was disposed to make fun of this addition to the larder.

CHAPTER IX.

THE LOSS OF THE BOATS.

CLAUDE, Foster, and St. Clair went down the lake in the *Petrel* to try for some trout at the outlet, while the other members of the party busied themselves in cutting fuel and arranging the funeral pyre for the wolves, which were to be burnt that evening.

The day was cloudy, with a light breeze, and the fishermen hoped to take some trout even though it was late in the day. Their luck, however, was very bad, and at noon they had taken only five trout, the largest in the lot weighing but a pound and a half. As they had brought some luncheon with them they concluded to stop until evening, and see if they could not do better in the latter part of the day.

Contrary to their usual custom, not one of the party had brought a gun or rifle with him, and while they were eating they saw two deer come to the river and drink and then return to the forest.

"If we had only brought our shooting irons," declared Foster, "we might have carried back some venison."

"We shall know better another time," asserted St. Clair.

"I never shall leave camp again," added Claude,

"especially when we are as short of supplies as we are now, without my gun or rifle."

"It is too confounded bad," observed Foster, "to lose those deer, for I prefer venison to wolf meat."

"Are you going to eat that stuff?" inquired St. Clair, laughing.

"Depends upon how hungry I am when we have supper."

About five o'clock the fish showed some disposition to rise, and St. Clair said he guessed they were getting hungry.

Foster took one that weighed two pounds, and St. Clair struck one that he thought weighed three, but he lost him. From that time on till half past six, when the boys stopped fishing, they had fine sport, and all of them enjoyed it immensely.

Claude, in particular, felt highly elated, for he had hooked three fish at one time, whose combined weight was ten pounds and a half, and, with the assistance of his friends, had saved them all, and he was as proud of this feat as any angler would be.

Altogether, the party had taken sixty-two pounds of trout; enough, as St. Clair jocosely remarked, "to keep the wolf from the door, or rather from the table, for several meals."

When the boys reached camp, supper was ready, and it was served at once. All of the party tried the wolf meat, but no one liked it, it being dry, tough, and stringy, and Le Roy declared he had rather eat skunk.

When the meal was over, the fishermen showed their

trout to the other members of the party, and Claude told the story of his lucky capture.

"I tell you, fellows," he said, "when I found I had three trout on, I became excited, and I was afraid of breaking my rod and losing the whole of them. I think I hooked the largest one first, on the lower fly, and he was full of game. I played him a while, and began reeling in, when whiz, flash! the other two struck, and then I had my hands full."

"I should say so," remarked Wood.

"They started down river as if they were free, and the way my line ran out made me feel sick. Some drift stuff had lodged a little way below where we were, and I knew if they went among that it was all day for me."

"I didn't expect you would save one of them," put in Foster.

"So I began to check them, and then tried to recover a little of my line. My stars! how my rod bent. The strain on it was fearful. But, to make a long story short, I managed to get the fish turned up stream again, and after an hour's hard fight, with the assistance of Bill and Andrew, I managed to save them."

"Which rod did you have, Claude?" inquired Drake.

"That new Conroy that I bought this spring, when I was over to see Phil. You know, he lives in Brooklyn. We came over to New York one morning, via Fulton Ferry, and as we were walking up Fulton Street I noticed some rods, in one of the windows of Conroy's store, that pleased my eye, and we stepped in

to look at them. I took a fancy to that one I used to-day, and bought it. And it's the best rod I ever saw."

"What did you give for it, Claude?" asked Wood.

"Twenty-five dollars. And, after the test it has stood to-day, I would not take a hundred for it."

"Look here, fellows," remarked Drake, "if we are going to start that barbecue, it's about time."

"That's so," replied Claude; "take some birch bark and we will light it up."

"Don't need any bark, it's all ready to light," said Wingate.

"This is not a barbecue, it is a funeral pyre," observed Foster.

The boys now walked to the huge pile of logs and brush, on and among which the wolves were laid, and set it on fire in four places.

As the flames gathered headway, the burning mass sent out such a heat that the party were glad to withdraw to some distance, where they sat and watched it, until the pile had been burned nearly flat, when fresh fuel was thrown on, and it was then left to take care of itself, the boys retiring at nine o'clock, in hopes of making up some of the sleep they had lost the night before.

About three o'clock in the morning, however, they were awakened by midges, swarming into the camp by the million, and from these terrible pests mosquito netting was no protection.

The boys stood the attack for a while, but were finally compelled to turn out, and build a smudge in

the camp, and around this they hovered until daylight, when they went outdoors and started a large smudge near their table, so that they could eat breakfast in some peace.

"I think these midges are worse than black flies and mosquitoes put together," remarked Wood, who was getting his first thorough introduction to them.

"They are the worst pest there is in the woods," declared Wingate, "and if a mule could only kick as hard, according to his size, as one of these atoms can bite, an army of men couldn't do anything with one."

"Did you ever watch a midge bite, Charlie?" inquired Le Roy.

"No. I can feel them quick enough, without watching them. They make me feel as if I was on fire, and I kill them as fast as possible."

"Well, I have. And they settle right down to business, when they get at it. They plunge their bill into your flesh, and then they kick their heels up into the air, and every time they kick they make you jump, and they kick about five hundred and forty times a minute."

A sally of laughter from his friends interrupted him for a moment, and then he added:—

"It's so, whether you believe it or not."

At breakfast Robbins announced that there was only coffee enough for one more meal, and that the tea was nearly gone.

"I think, then," said Claude, "that you had better save that coffee for next Sunday morning, and that we had better drink tea only once a day, at supper, until we reach some place where we can renew our stores."

"And where will that be?" queried Maynard.

"The first place I know of is the farm at the head of Long Lake on the Allagash waters."

"How far is that?"

"Not far from one hundred miles. We have to run down the St. John to the Seven Islands first, a distance of seventy-five or eighty miles. Then walk across to Long Lake over a tote road, twelve or fifteen miles farther."

"Could we have the supplies hauled back to the river, or should we have to lug them?" inquired Le Roy.

"Don't know, Tommy. We can find out about that when we get there."

"If we stay in this vicinity much longer, we shall have to put up with some pretty primitive meals, for I made a thorough examination of the stores yesterday, and the groceries will be all gone in a week except the tea. Although we brought a large lot of supplies, we have a big crowd to feed, and there has not been enough fish and game brought in."

"How is the pork and flour?" asked St. Clair.

"There is not enough of either to last over Sunday."

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Drake, "are we on the verge of starvation?"

"It's beginning to look that way," replied Maynard, dryly.

"How about salt?" inquired Claude. "We need that more than anything else."

"I should think there was about two pounds left, and we must economize in the use of it."

"Here's a pretty state of things," remarked Wingate, with a laugh, in which his friends joined.

"It strikes me," said Foster, "that we had better getting down river a little nearer to the next base of supplies."

"I agree with you," added Le Roy.

"And, as it may take us a week before we can renew our stores, I think we had better start to-morrow," and Claude looked at him, to judge what his friends thought of his proposal.

They all expressed themselves in favor of it, except Wingate.

"I don't intend to leave here until I see those beavers, if I have to follow you down river on foot," declared Charlie, good-naturedly.

"My stars! I had forgotten them in the face of possible starvation," laughed Claude. "But I'll tell you what we can do, Charlie. We can all go up to the beaver dam to-day, and then leave here to-morrow."

"Yes, we can do that. And I move that we start at once."

"Wait until Maynard and I clear up the breakfast things, for I wish to get a look at those beavers as well as the rest of you," and Robbins hurried round to finish his work.

About eight o'clock the whole party started in the three boats, having first released the doe, which, until then, they had kept tied up in camp.

Rowing across the lake, they landed at the same place where the boys had stopped on Sunday, and,

after pulling their boats out of the water, started for the beaver dam, led by St. Clair.

Being so short of provisions, they had all made up their minds not to return to camp empty-handed if they could help it, and each member of the party carried either a gun or a rifle.

As they made their way through the forest, they walked silently and in single file so as not to frighten any animals in the vicinity, hoping to see one or more deer along the small stream on which the beavers were located.

Their caution proved of no avail, however, as they came in sight of the dam without having run across anything eatable.

When they reached the high bank from which Le Roy, St. Clair, and Drake had watched the beavers before, the boys settled themselves in comfortable positions to await the appearance of the animals.

Speaking only in whispers, they kept their places for an hour before their perseverance was rewarded, and then the beavers suddenly made their appearance from out the forest, on the opposite side of the river, and took to the water.

They played about in the pond for nearly an hour, swimming from one place to another, and apparently enjoying themselves as much as a party of boys would.

The young fellows watched their gambols with great interest; and when at last the beavers disappeared beneath the water to visit their lodge, the party came from their place of concealment, and, wading across the stream, walked up to the place where the beavers

had worked, and all obtained some of their cuttings.

Securing what they wished, they were about retracing their steps to the dam, when Foster espied a buck wading across the stream at the upper end of the pond. The animal was too far away for a sure shot.

After a few words among themselves, Wingate and St. Clair were chosen to represent the party in shooting the deer.

As the place where the boys were standing was comparatively open, Charlie and Andrew took to the woods, while the rest of the party dropped down in the long grass out of sight.

Wingate had a rifle with him, and St. Clair a double-barrel gun, and it was agreed between them that, if they got within shooting distance of the deer, they would both fire together, as they did not care how much the skin was riddled, it being the meat they were after.

Keeping along the edge of the woods, avoiding stepping on every dead limb or other stick that would make any noise, they soon came in sight of the buck again, which had stopped after crossing the stream, as if undetermined which way to go.

The young hunters now dropped to the ground, and began crawling toward their victim, and succeeded in getting within ten rods, when the buck turned his head toward them, and looked suspiciously in their direction.

"Fire, Charlie!" whispered his friend; "the sinner has scented us."

Accordingly, Wingate pulled trigger, and the next moment the deer dropped like a stone. Then the boys

jumped up and ran toward him, reaching him just as he began to struggle to gain his feet, and St. Clair, seeing he was not dead, put a charge of buckshot into him, that destroyed every sign of life instantly.

On examining the animal's body, it was found that Wingate's bullet had ploughed a furrow across the head of the deer, only stunning him for a moment, and not disabling him in the least.

The two friends hung the buck up to the limb of a tree near them, and then cut his throat to bleed him, and, at this moment, the rest of the party appeared.

"First deer of the season. Hurrah!" shouted Foster, as he caught sight of the buck hanging to a tree.

"Yes, and I am sorry we have had to shoot game out of season," remarked Claude. "But we can't starve, and necessity knows no law."

"The law never was intended to cover such a case as this," remarked Robbins.

"I don't suppose it was," returned Claude; "yet, if we could have done without it, I should rather not have had the animal shot. But it certainly seems excusable in our case."

"I don't intend to starve up in this country while I have any ammunition left, and can find anything eatable to shoot," said Wingate; "I did not come up here for that purpose."

"Oh, there's no danger of our starving," declared Maynard, laughing. "for when the grub is all gone, we can live on spruce gum and bark, or some other product of the woods."

After the buck was thoroughly bled, the boys pro-

ceeded to skin and cut him up. Then, taking one of the hindquarters, Robbins cut some slices from it, one for each of the fellows, while Maynard started a fire.

Each boy then roasted his slice of venison on a stick ; holding it over the fire, and turning it from time to time, to prevent its burning.

The only thing they had been able to bring for their lunch was some pilot bread, or hardtack, as it is more commonly called in the woods. The meat was a welcome addition to this, although they were forced to eat it without salt, not having thought to bring any of that very useful article with them.

When they had disposed of their somewhat primitive meal, and washed it down with a draught from the clear, sparkling stream in front of them, they divided the pieces of meat among the party, and started for camp, stopping a short time near the beaver lodge to enable those who had not seen it fairly, to get a good look at it. None of the beavers were in sight, nor did any of them appear, although the party lingered nearly half an hour in the vicinity of the dam.

They did not cross the stream at the dam this time, but continued down the river, on the north side, until about opposite the place where they had struck it in the morning, and then forded it there.

"I'll bet there are trout in this stream," remarked Foster, as they waded across. "Just look at that pool below."

"But we have nothing to catch them with, if there are," added Drake, who was close to him.

After leaving the stream behind them, they travelled

as silently as possible, in hope of seeing more game.

Half way to the lake they found some large spruces, that had quite a lot of gum on them, and the boys dug off all they could reach handily, about two pounds, and soon they were all chewing in unison, trying "Maynard's food," as Wood expressed it.

The day was hot and sultry, and they went along very leisurely; but, although they kept a sharp lookout, their eyes were not gladdened by the sight of game.

They reached the point a few minutes before three, and walked straight to the spot where they had left their boats, but it was vacant. Not a boat was to be seen, either along the shore, or on the lake, and the different members of the party looked at each other with surprise and consternation, and a feeling of alarm took possession of them all.

"I should like to know where our boats have gone!" cried Le Roy, a little savagely, after there had been an awful stillness for a few seconds, for the terrible discovery they had made had deprived them all, momentarily, of the power of speech.

"And so should I," echoed Claude. "Great Scott! fellows, this is a serious matter."

"They couldn't go without hands," remarked Drake, looking as if he had made an assertion that nobody could deny.

"Several men have been here since we left," declared Wingate, who had been examining the sand in the vicinity carefully.

The whole party looked sharply at the tracks Wingate had pointed out, and finally came to the conclusion that the boats had been stolen by two or three men, they were not exactly sure of the number; but why they should have taken all the boats, when one would have answered their purpose, was more than they could determine.

Luckily the boats had contained nothing beside the oars and paddles, and the party was thus spared additional loss.

"Well, fellows," observed Claude, after the party had talked the matter over for some time, "the boats are gone. Of that fact we are unfortunately certain, and the sooner we get to camp the better, and see what else we have lost. And we must travel as fast as we can if we would reach it before dark, for I think we must have seven or eight miles to walk at least. It is a long distance around the shore of this lake to our camp."

"You are right, Claude," remarked Maynard, "so let us be off at once. One thing in our favor: we have daylight enough to get there in if we improve it, and we can't lose our way, for all we have to do is to follow the lake shore."

As the boys made their way slowly along through the woods, the loss of their boats was the chief topic of conversation, and they declared dire vengeance on the scoundrels who had stolen them, if they could only run across the thieves. But their chance for finding the rascals they felt to be small indeed.

"I suppose we'll find everything gone from the camp

when we get there," puffed St. Clair, as the party made the best time they were capable of toward the head of the lake.

"I hope not," remarked Claude; "the loss of our boats is enough, without anything else going."

"I don't see what we shall do without them; how are we going to get out of this wilderness without boats?" queried Wood.

"Walk," replied Drake, laughing.

"We will talk the matter over to-night, fellows," said Claude, "and determine what we shall do. We will find our way out of this scrape without walking."

"Sure pop!" added Robbins.

Conversation was now dispensed with, as the boys walked so fast they could not spare the breath for it, and they were determined to reach camp before dark.

The most of the way, the woods were quite open, and they made much better progress than they would have done in a scrub growth. From time to time, as they caught glimpses of the lake, they scanned it eagerly, in hope of observing a boat; but nothing was to be seen.

They reached Baker Brook at half past six, and at seven o'clock were in camp.

"Here is the doe we turned loose this morning," said Wingate, who was the first fellow in.

"That's funny," added Wood; "I thought we had seen the last of her this morning."

The party now began a thorough search of the camp and store-house, but could not see that a single article had been disturbed, and they came to the conclusion that the men who had gone off with the boats had not

been near the camp. This was some comfort, and, by the time the search had been finished, Robbins was able to announce that supper was ready.

All were quickly at the table, for the long tramp through the woods had given the whole party healthy appetites, and it was some time before Robbins and Maynard could get a mouthful themselves, they were kept so busy with waiting on the others.

When the supper was entirely over, all the fellows gathered around a large smudge in front of the cabin, and discussed the situation for two hours. The worst thing about it appeared to be that they did not know which way the boats had been taken, whether up river or down, although the majority of the party thought they had gone down river. They were shortly to get some information on that point.

"I'll tell you what we can do, fellows. Go down river on a raft," proposed St. Clair. "Any kind of navigation is better than walking through the woods, especially where there are no tote roads. And the first one the maps show is the one Claude spoke of last night, running from the Seven Islands to Long Lake. So we shall have to reach the Seven Islands in some manner."

"Can we build a raft that will carry us all?" inquired Wood, doubtfully.

"Can we? Can a rope walk? Or a horse laugh? Or a cat fish? Of course we can," put in Wingate, with a laugh.

"But we have no proper tools," added Wood.

"Tools? Haven't we axes, and an inch auger?

I'd like to know what more we want," queried Maynard.

"That last tool you spoke of augurs well for the success of the raft," remarked Claude, dryly.

"Oh, shut up!"

"Put him out!"

"Go to bed!"

Cried several voices at once, and Foster gave Claude a slap on the back that made him wince.

"But, seriously, fellows, there is no trouble in building a raft, if we can find logs enough of the right size near the river," declared Claude.

"It will take a raft of them, though," said Drake.

"Another donkey brays," remarked Le Roy.

"You have a brazen face to make such a remark," retorted Drake.

"Come, give us a rest," said Robbins, "and save some of your cheap jokes until the next time."

"There is plenty of cedar just below the outlet of the lake, on our side, and we can fell some of the trees right into the stream."

"I noticed them myself, Charlie," replied Claude, "when we were there fishing yesterday, and I think we can procure all we need in that locality. I can speak only for myself, but I think the best thing we can do is to move to the foot of the lake the first thing after breakfast to-morrow, and commence the construction of the raft."

"How shall we get there?" inquired Wood.

"You can swim down the lake if you prefer it," re-

plied the leader of the party, with a laugh, "but I shall walk through the woods."

As Claude ceased speaking, voices were heard behind them, and each member of the party was on his feet in an instant, listening, with his face turned toward the sounds.

"What's up now?" queried St. Clair.

"We shall see in a moment," replied Claude.

"Yes, and we had better not be caught napping," declared Wingate, and, slipping into the camp, he came out with his Winchester rifle, which was capable of doing some mischief as it was a full magazine, and was loaded.

A few minutes later six men filed out of the shadows of the forest, and came straight up to where the boys stood.

There was fire enough from the smudge to throw a small circle of light around them, and the boys and their visitors looked at each other a moment before speaking.

One of the men broke the silence.

"Good evening, boys," he said; "have you run across two men around here to-day?"

"No, sir," answered Claude. "Your party are the first persons we have seen since we came here, but we know that some one has been in the vicinity to-day."

"How so?"

"Because we have had three boats stolen to-day."

"From here?"

"No; from the other side of the lake." And Claude told his story.

"That is bad for us if those fellows have got boats," remarked the man who had first spoken, and who was the leader of the party. "We didn't count on that."

"That's sure, we didn't," replied one of his men

"Who are those men, and what are they doing here?" inquired Claude.

"They murdered a man down to Moosehead Lake the other day in a drunken row, and we are after them. I am a sheriff, two of these men are my deputies, and the others are men we hired to guide us through the woods and help us carry the men back."

"Did you say there were only two of them?" inquired Wingate.

"Yes, only two. They are French Canadians, and are putting for Canada."

"Then, what in the name of common-sense did they take all three of our boats for?"

"I can tell you, Charlie," spoke up Claude. "It was so nobody could follow them."

"You are right, young man," added the sheriff, "and I should not be surprised if they sink two of them down the river somewhere."

"If they do, and I ever see them, I'll pay them for it," declared Maynard, angrily.

"Have they any grub with them?" asked Drake.

"I think not," replied the sheriff, "and they will probably go to the Depot Farm for some, for their stomachs must be pretty empty by this time."

The sheriff's party now unstrapped their packs, and the officer announced his intention of camping where they were, and told one of the men to get supper, for

they had been so eager in the case that they had not eaten a mouthful since morning.

Claude invited them to sleep in the camp, but Mr. Grabem thanked him, and told him it was so warm they had just as lief sleep outdoors.

"Which way were you heading?" asked the sheriff of Claude.

"We were going down the St. John River, and we are going now. We shall build a raft to-morrow."

"You may recover your boats later on, if the villains have not destroyed them. That is, if we catch them. We shall start at daylight for the head of Long Lake, and will get there Thursday night if nothing happens; they won't hurry, now they have the boats, but I am quite sure they will go to the farm for some supplies, and I think we shall get there as soon as they do." And the sheriff looked as if he meant to do it.

"If they once get into Canada, you cannot take them?" remarked Le Roy, with an inquiring look.

"Not without the proper papers," said one of the deputies.

"Come, fellows, let's turn in; it's eleven o'clock." And Foster arose with a yawn, and went indoors, and he was shortly followed by the others, who left the fires and the smudge to the care of the new-comers.

CHAPTER X.

BUILDING THE RAFT.

AT daylight Wednesday morning the sheriff and his party were up and getting their breakfast. Just before they were ready to start, the boys turned out, wishing to see them off.

"Did you ever see those two men you are in pursuit of?" inquired Claude.

"No," replied Mr. Grabem, "but we have a good description of them."

"What kind of looking fellows are they?" asked Maynard.

"One of them is tall, dark-complected, has lost one front tooth, and weighs about one hundred and forty pounds. The other is about five feet two, stockily built, light-complected, has red hair, and a mole on his right cheek."

"What is that?" cried Wingate, excitedly, who had come up just in time to hear the sheriff's description.

Grabem repeated what he had told Claude.

"Great Cæsar's ghost, Claude! That is a mighty good description of Bill and Jim."

"Those men's names are Bill and Jim Dubois."

"What!" fairly shrieked Wingate. "I'll bet a thousand dollars they are the same scoundrels!"

"But those villains were sent to Thomaston for ten years, and it is not two yet since they began serving their term," remarked Claude.

"But they may have escaped," said Wingate.

"I heard a man say at the Northeast Carry that they were State-prison birds," spoke up one of the deputies.

"By Jove! If we meet them, I'll save you the trouble of arresting one of them," declared Wingate, "for I'll shoot him at sight."

"Ain't you talking a little loud?" queried the sheriff, who could not understand the excitement of the boys.

"You'd talk loud if you had been through what Claude and I have with those thieves, scoundrels, and murderers," replied Wingate. "Let me tell you." And he proceeded to give the sheriff and his party an account of their adventure with Bill and Jim, as recounted in "Down the West Branch."

"Well, you have good reason to be poison on them, that's a fact," acknowledged Mr. Grabem when Wingate had concluded his story.

"But these may not be the same men," suggested Claude.

"That is possible; but I have a presentiment that they are, and it will be a sour day for that red-headed Satan when I run across him. I told him I should live to see him hanged."

"Better not shoot him, then," laughed the sheriff, "but let the law take its course. But we must be off, or we may miss our men. Keep a sharp lookout on the

river, for there is about one chance in a thousand that you may see them."

"You can bet we will," declared Claude, with emphasis. "And if you see anything of our boats, just take care of them and we will make it right with you."

"I will: and, now, good morning!"

"Good morning," replied Claude. "And good luck!" shouted all the boys.

"So you really think, Charlie, that the murderers and the coiners are the same scoundrels," said St. Clair.

"Haven't a doubt of it in my own mind. I have always felt as if we should meet those villains again."

"If this crowd meets them," remarked Maynard, "if we don't kill them, we'll leave them in such shape that they'll wish we had."

"That's so," cried several of the party.

All of the members of the Lake and Forest Club had heard of Claude and Charlie's adventure with the coiners while on their trip down the West Branch, and were justly indignant at the cruel treatment their friends had received, and would gladly welcome the chance of returning the villains some of their own kind of coin.

"Well, Maynard, let's get breakfast," said Robbins, coming back to the first business of the day.

"What shall we get?"

"Fry some of the trout. I guess we shall need the whole of them, and a piece of venison. You start the fire, and I'll get the fish and meat ready."

"If we can only meet those scoundrels," asserted

Wingate, "I'll pay that skunk for spitting in my face."

"Can't get over that, can you, Charlie?" remarked St. Clair.

"No, nor I don't want to, until after I've pounded about all the life there is in his miserable body out of it."

After breakfast had been eaten, the boys shouldered their fire-arms, and took their rods and other personal effects, and started for the foot of the lake. It was nine o'clock when they reached it, and St. Clair and Maynard were detailed to stay there and watch it, while the rest of the party returned for the stores and cooking utensils.

"You had better improve the time while we are away," suggested Robbins, "in catching some trout, if you can."

"We'll see what we can do," returned St. Clair, as the boys started back to the camp.

"We shall have to call this a tramping-out scrape, instead of a camping-out trip," laughed Le Roy, as the party tramped back to the foot of the lake.

"We are camping and tramping both," added Drake.

"I don't think much of these carries where there is no path; do you, Claude?" queried Drake.

"Can't say that I do, Bob. I prefer a turnpike to walk on."

"The fellow that macadamized this road forgot to level it," added Wingate.

By the time the camp was reached, the boys were somewhat tired, and sat down to rest a few moments,

before packing up their loads. While busily engaged, the doe came in, and walked up to Claude, and sniffed at his hands.

"She wants some salt," suggested Wood.

"I can't give her any more. Salt is too precious now. We must be saving of what we have," returned Claude.

When the boys left the camp, they were surprised to see that the doe followed a little way behind them, stopping when they stopped, and walking when they walked.

The second load for each of the boys was much heavier than the first had been, and they had to rest about every fifteen minutes, and it was nearly two o'clock when they reached the outlet.

St. Clair and Maynard had busied themselves all the forenoon in cutting timber for the raft, and had half a dozen good cedar sticks all ready when they left off to get dinner, about half past one.

As the last of the trout that had been carried to the head of the lake had been eaten that morning, St. Clair tried his luck fishing, while Maynard was building the fire, and making such slight preparation as he could until the stores and cooking utensils made their appearance.

"Dinner all ready, Frank?" cried Claude, as the "packers," as Le Roy called them, came up and deposited their loads.

"How under the sun did you expect me to get dinner without stores or cooking utensils?"

"Oh, by some trick of legerdemain."

"Has that fellow been round here?" inquired Wood.

"What fellow?" and Claude stared at his friend, having no idea of what he meant.

"Legerdemain."

The boys laughed.

"Get out," exclaimed Claude.

"I am out."

"Well, get in, then."

"In where?"

"In the lake."

"The water's too wet."

"I say, Andrew," called Le Roy to St. Clair, "are you catching any fish?"

"Yes."

"What kind?"

"Raw."

The party laughed at Le Roy's discomfiture.

Robbins and Claude helped Maynard get the dinner, and, when it was ready, Maynard put his finger in his mouth and blew a shrill whistle, which brought St. Clair without loss of time.

"I never was so hungry in my life," said the fisherman, as he came up to his friends, wiping the perspiration from his forehead, for it was a very hot day.

"You're always hungry," declared Drake.

"I'll bet we have a shower before night. It's an awful sultry day," remarked Foster.

"The clouds begin to look like it off there in the west," replied Wingate.

"Where's Fanny?" inquired Maynard, the name the boys had given the doe.

"Give it up!" replied Robbins. "She was with us until we were most here. Met some fellow she was acquainted with perhaps, and stopped to buzz him."

"What a set of chumps you fellows are," remarked Wood, from the table. "If you don't sit down soon, you'll be minus your dinner."

"How long did you cut your sticks for the raft, Andrew?" inquired Claude, while they were eating.

"As near twenty-five teet as I could guess."

"How near was that?" asked Foster, with a roguish look.

"Measure them and see."

"Did you get out many?" queried Claude.

"Six."

"We need a dozen, at least. But, by the way the sky looks, I think we had better construct some kind of a shelter, before going to work on the raft."

"My sentiments exactly," remarked Maynard, "and there had better be a pile of wood cut, for we shall hardly get away from here before Friday morning."

"I wouldn't start Friday," said Drake.

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Claude, laughing. "Columbus sailed on Friday, and discovered America on Friday."

When the boys had finished their meal, they went to work with a will, in spite of black flies and mosquitoes, which hovered about them in clouds, and in two hours had a very fair shelter built for the night, large enough to accommodate them all, with close stowing.

Then they moved into their shanty the very few

articles they now had left that would be likely to be injured by the rain, and, just as they had completed the work, a heavy rumble of thunder broke upon the stillness of the air, and a few drops of rain fell.

The shower came down upon them with wonderful swiftness, however, for, in five minutes from the time they had noticed the first flash of lightning, the rain was pouring in torrents, the wind was blowing a young hurricane, and the flash and crash of the electricity in the air gave them an uncomfortable feeling that was nearly akin to fear. At least, it was not a pleasant experience.

From their shelter, where they were huddled together, they noticed Fanny come out of the woods, and walk toward the table. Before she reached it, however, there came the sharpest flash of lightning they had seen, and then a terrific crash of thunder, long drawn out, and when they looked at the doe again it was lying on the ground dead.

It had been struck by the lightning, and the air around them smelled sulphurous.

"I tell you, fellows, that came too close for comfort," remarked Maynard, "and it has killed poor Fanny. If she had lived, I believe she would have followed us all the way down river."

"Well, we shall have to eat her now," said Wood, rather soberly.

"I guess not," replied Claude, somewhat amused, in spite of the serious side of the question; "an animal killed by lightning is not fit to eat."

"You don't mean it?"

"Yes, I do. It is a fact, so that eating any part of the doe is out of the question."

The storm, as if being satisfied with the sacrifice of the doe, now began to grow lighter, the flashes of lightning coming less frequent, and the detonations of the thunder not being nearly so heavy, and in half an hour after Fanny's death the sun came out clear again.

When the rain was over, the boys turned their attention to getting firewood enough to last them until Friday morning, and this occupied them until supper time.

During the evening the plans for constructing the raft were pretty thoroughly discussed, and it was decided to build it about the size of one of the head-works they had seen the lumbermen use, which are in the vicinity of twelve by twenty-five or thirty feet, and a raft of that size was capable of carrying a dozen men.

Every one in the party was very tired that night, for they had passed through a hard day, and at nine o'clock every fellow was asleep. Nothing occurred to disturb their slumbers during the night, and they all turned out Thursday morning, feeling quite refreshed, and ready to push the construction of the craft on which they depended to carry them down river.

Breakfast was over at six o'clock, and the entire party, with the exception of the cook and his assistant, began work on the raft.

As the trees were felled and trimmed, and cut to the proper length, all but those who were wielding the axes would carry them to the water, and sometimes the choppers had to give the others a lift.

By noon they had all the logs for the raft cut, and in the water, and then took an hour's rest, during which time they ate a hearty dinner.

In the afternoon a number of poles of the same length as the logs were cut to lay between every two logs, where they came together, thus making the surface of the raft more even.

Six small trees, about five inches through, were then cut of sufficient length to cover the entire width of the raft, and these were fastened securely to the logs in the following manner, making the whole structure firm and strong.

Two auger holes were bored in every log on each side of the cross-sticks. Into these holes, short pieces of green withes were inserted, passing over the cross-sticks in the shape of an ox-bow, and wedges were then made and driven into each hole to prevent the ends of the withes from pulling out.

The work was rushed lively, the only interruption being when some fellow had to stop occasionally to smear a fresh supply of war paint on his face and hands, to keep the flies, midges, and mosquitoes at a respectful distance.

One of the end cross-ties was laid in position as soon as ready, and, while one of the fellows was turning the auger, the others were making wedges and cutting the withes to the right length.

The boring of the holes was back-aching business, and tired the boys even more than carrying the logs to the river, and, in order to have the work go on as rapidly as possible, as soon as one fellow bored a hole, he

would change work with some other member of the party; and, as Robbins and Maynard joined them in the work after the first three holes were made, it gave each quite a rest, as a fellow had then to bore only every ninth hole; yet as there were one hundred and twenty holes to make, this was about as often as any member of the party cared to take a turn at the auger.

By unanimous assent, Claude was appointed master-workman, and he not only kept on the jump himself the whole afternoon, but managed to keep everybody else busy, and at six o'clock, when Robbins and Maynard left off to get supper, the raft was so nearly done that the remainder of the crew finished it by the time that Maynard sent forth his call to bring them to the evening meal.

They had made a fairly good job of it, and every one in the party was pleased with "the building of the ship," as Wingate put it, and Foster laughingly christened it the *Slow Poke*, on account of the slow sailing they expected from it.

After supper everything that was not needed at breakfast the next morning was packed up, for the boys wished to get an early start, and at ten o'clock they retired, glad of the chance to stretch themselves out for a little rest.

Robbins had declared he would have everybody up early Friday morning, and he was as good as his word. For, as the first faint streaks of daylight shot across the sky in the east, he arose, and, after dressing, pulled the blankets off of his sleeping friends, and shouted: —

"Turn out! turn out! the good ship *Slow Poke* sails at seven o'clock, and don't wait for any man."

"Or woman either," shouted Foster.

"I'll turn you out," growled Drake, not relishing being awakened at such an early hour, and, reaching for Robbins, he caught him by the foot, tripping him up, and bringing him down across Maynard and Wingate. And a scuffle ensued which awoke every member of the party, and, with jokes and laughter, they arose and dressed.

Robbins had plenty of assistance in getting breakfast, and at six o'clock they sat down to eat it.

No time was wasted at the table, and, by the united efforts of the whole party, they succeeded in making a start at half past seven o'clock, which Claude said was doing very well, as that was only half an hour behind the time they had set.

CHAPTER XI.

A NOVEL TUGBOAT.

THEY had provided themselves with long poles to propel and guide the raft in rapids, and to keep her away from the banks of the river, and had brought along half a dozen cedar splits, which Claude intended to fashion into rude paddles as they floated down the stream.

"Good-bye, Baker Lake!" shouted Wood, as their craft gathered headway, assisted by a current that ran about two knots an hour.

It was a lovely morning, with the sun shining brightly, and the air was as clear as a bell, the sultriness of the two previous days being all gone, and, as Claude said, their voyage began quite auspiciously.

"I would like to know how Baker Lake obtained its name," remarked Drake, thoughtfully, as that lovely sheet of water faded away from their sight like some dissolving view.

"I am the only living person that can tell you," replied Wingate, with mock seriousness.

"What's eating you now?" queried Robbins.

"Black flies! confound them!" cried Wingate, and then proceeded: "Many moons ago, when the red man was cut up into so many pieces that he covered the whole of New England, like a rag mat over a hole

in a much worn carpet, two tribes, the Kill-'em-Slows, and Scalp-'em-Quicks, met by the side of the silvery waters of the lake for a five o'clock tea."

"Were you there?" queried Foster, with a wink at Claude.

"How do you expect that I could relate this veracious piece of history if I had not been an eye-witness to what I am going to tell you? Now, keep quiet, and don't interrupt me again, and remember what your mother taught you, that little boys should be seen and not heard."

"Time you shut your mouth, then, Charlie," said Drake.

Wingate shot a dignified frown at his friend, and then went on:—

"Everything went as merry as a scalp dance until the bucks of the two tribes began loading up with fire-water, and after a while this led to a diversity of opinion, and from joking and laughter the two tribes drifted into angry words and opprobrious epithets. Tomahawks and scalping-knives were quickly brought forth, and shortly after there was as pretty a fight going on as ever was seen at an Irish wake.

"The squaws, not to be outdone by the sterner sex, started a little scrimmage of their own, while I sneaked out of the way, and climbed a spruce tree, where I could see all that was going on.

"The fight lasted all night, and in the morning the ground was strewn with corpses, piled high on each other; the fair and the foul sex intermingled without regard to age or beauty.

"Only one bare, solitary red man of the forest remained to tell the tale. He was the head baker of the Scalp-'em-Quicks, and when he saw the fallen numbers of both friend and foe, that, according to Indian custom, he must scalp, it made him tired, and, jumping into a canoe, he paddled into the middle of the lake, and, after chanting his death song, of which I have an exact copy at home, he took a header into the lake, and that was the last I ever saw of him.

"A party of trappers found me the next day accidentally, and took me home with them, and I told them the name of the sheet of water where they found me was Baker Lake, I having named it for the baker of the tribe, whom I loved better than raw pork."

"What a yarn!" shouted Wood.

"Manufactured from potash!" yelled Foster.

Just then the raft, which was now floating in shallow water, brought up solid on a rock, and Wingate had no time to speak as it required the entire strength of the party to get the *Slow Poke* off the rock, and this was only effected by all hands going into the water, and lifting until, as Le Roy expressed it, "they saw stars."

Once more afloat, and, as they drifted along, it was decided not to stop at all for dinner, but to keep on floating until five o'clock, and then tie up for the night.

Drake proposed that they should float all night, but the sentiment of the party was against it, as they did not know what dangers might befall them after dark, and they thought travelling by daylight, while it took longer, was much the safer way.

They had the usual changes and are met with on

fresh-water rivers; rapids, falls, shallow water, and reaches of dead water, where there scarcely seemed to be any current.

They grounded on rocks several times, and were hung up by snags twice, and in several pieces of rapids they had a hard job to manage the raft; but, by working quickly and carefully in bad places, they surmounted all the difficulties they met with during the day, and tied up a little after five at the mouth of Brailey Brook, just below where it enters the South Branch.

That night, Claude was lucky enough to shoot a deer, having sat up until midnight watching for that purpose. It was a buck, in fine condition, and a most welcome addition to the larder.

Saturday morning, Wingate and Foster tried their luck at fishing at the mouth of the brook, and took about forty small trout, which enabled the cooks to serve up a very bounteous breakfast.

The *Slow Poke* was got under way at seven o'clock, and their second day's voyage commenced. It promised to be very hot by noon, as the air had the same old sultry feeling in it. They found more water on the river Saturday, having passed two quite large feeders of the stream the day before — Turner Brook and Brailey Brook, already spoken of.

As some of the party were dissatisfied with going without their dinner the day before, they tied up to the eastern river bank between twelve and one; and the entire party assisted in getting the noonday meal.

While they were eating it, a moose crossed the river

from their side, in plain sight of them, but they did not try to follow him, as they were too anxious to reach the Long Lake Farm and see if they could hear anything of their boats, which they still hoped to recover.

At 1:30 they made a fresh start, and about half an hour afterward, while paddling along a piece of dead water, they saw an object floating ahead of them, which they took for the butt of some large tree, an old-growth pine, Claude thought.

A nearer approach, however, convinced them that the object was an enormous turtle asleep on the water.

"Great Scott! what a turtle!" exclaimed Foster; "he's as large as a barn door."

"Not quite," laughed Claude; "but he's an old sockdolager! that's a fact."

"Is he good to eat?" queried Drake, anxiously, visions of green-turtle soup floating through his mind.

"No, you jackass. It's a mud-turtle," whispered Maynard, softly, laughing quietly at his friend's question.

"By the Great Horn Spoon, I say let's capture him, and make him tow us down river," whispered Wingate, excitedly; "he'll be as good as a tugboat."

"What an idea!" ejaculated Le Roy, in an undertone.

"No harm in trying it," insisted Wingate, taking a piece of three-eighths rigging, and making a slip-noose in one end of it.

The boys now kept silent and let the raft drift down on the turtle, whose hind flippers were sprawled out nearly straight on the water, while Charlie stood on the

forward end of the raft, slip-noose in hand, ready to throw it over one of the turtle's propellers, as soon as they should be near enough.

Claude, seeing sport in the capture of the turtle, even if Charlie's somewhat quixotic idea could not be carried out, caught up another piece of line, and made a noose in one end, and took his place near Wingate, to assist in the capture.

"My stars!" exclaimed St. Clair, "he's the leviathan of turtles. He is five feet long, if he's an inch."

The *Slow Poke* slowly drifted down to the turtle, propelled only by a friendly breeze, for everybody had stopped paddling, for fear of waking the sleeping giant; and when within two feet of him Charlie and Claude reached forward and slipped their nooses over both of the turtle's hind flippers, and then gave the lines a pull that tightened the knots, and awoke Mr. Turtle to the fact that "eternal vigilance is the price of liberty."

The amphibious monster, when he found himself in the toils, started for the bottom of the river, and would have assuredly taken Charlie and Claude with him, if the other fellows had not sprung quickly to their help.

"Great snakes!" exclaimed Rob'ins, "he's as strong as an elephant!"

"Make the ends of the two lines fast to the forward cross-tie," shouted Claude; "we can't hold the monster this way. He'll tire us out and get away."

This suggestion was quickly acted on, and, after the lines had been secured, and the boys had taken a rest, they took another pull on them and brought the turtle to the surface again.

He now started for the east bank of the river, but, when the boys rapped him smartly with one of the poles on that side, he headed into the middle of the stream.

He swam about a hundred yards, towing the raft twice as fast as it had gone since leaving the lake, and then turned abruptly toward the west bank; but the poles were again brought into requisition, and after a few good thumps had been delivered on his port side he turned toward the middle of the stream; but he had no sooner reached it than he undertook to go to the bottom again.

The crew of the *Slow Poke* were equal to the emergency, however, for, seizing hold of the lines, they hauled with such good will that they soon had Neptune, as Foster christened him, at the top of the water once more.

A few punches in the rear started Neptune down river again, and for about fifteen minutes he behaved admirably.

“Talk about towboats!” exclaimed Wingate; “what do you want better than this? What do you say to the idea now, you chump?” poking Le Roy in the ribs. “Isn’t it better than paddling?”

“Enough sight, if your engine only holds out, and your boiler don’t blow up. I always said you had quite a head, Charlie.”

“But, unfortunately, nothing in it,” spoke up St. Clair, with a laugh.

Neptune had not wholly learned his business, however: for, after turning a sharp bend in the river, he struck for the eastern shore once more.

Again he was thumped and pounded until he took the middle of the stream, and shortly after the raft reached a shallow place in the river, where the water flowed over a bed of sand and gravel, and Neptune took bottom there and began to crawl. The water, being very clear in this part of the stream, enabled the boys to see every motion of the huge turtle, as he slowly poked along, leaving a trail behind him on the sand.

"Confound him, he walks too slow," remarked Wingate, and, taking his pole, he prodded the turtle until he brought him to the surface, and Neptune took to swimming again; and again the boys, by the aid of their poles, managed to keep him in the middle of the river the greater part of the time.

At half past four they reached the forks of the river, where the south and southwest branches unite, the latter being much the larger of the two. Passing the junction of the two waters, they landed just below the Southwest Branch, on the north side of the main river.

The raft was made secure, and, while Robbins and Maynard began preparations for supper, the rest of the party turned their attention to the turtle, which had crawled as far out on the bank of the river as the length of the towlines would permit.

Wood walked up as near him as he dared, and, looking carefully at his back, saw some queer-looking marks on his shell, and he called Claude to come and help him decipher them.

Time had almost obliterated th but after a while,

to his surprise and astonishment, Claude made out the letters, and they deciphered the words, and the inscription read, "Baron de St. Castine, Oct. 15, 1644."

"Great Jerusalem!" exclaimed the bewildered leader of the party, rubbing his eyes to be sure that he was right; and then, turning to his friends, some of whom had followed him, he said:—

"How old do you think that turtle is?"

"Older than any fellow in this crowd, I'll bet a cent," declared Wingate.

"Well, if I have made out this inscription on his shell correctly, he is about 236 years old!"

"What are you giving us?" queried Wood.

"Is that all?" laughed St. Clair. "Couldn't you add a year or two more?"

"I'm not joking, Andrew. You just examine his shell. You see, the letters and figures are badly worn, but I make them read, 'Baron de St. Castine, Oct. 15, 1644,' and that would make the turtle about the age I mentioned."

"Come here, fellows," sang out Wood; "this turtle of ours is a curiosity."

The rest of the party gathered around Neptune, and, after carefully studying the hieroglyphics on his shell, came to the conclusion that Claude had made them out correctly.

"If Barnum had that turtle," remarked Foster, with a twinkle in his eye, "he would swear that he was one of the original turtles that went into the ark with Noah."

"If he did," declared Robbins, "he would get a good

deal nearer the truth than he does in some of the statements he makes about his show."

"Take off your hats, fellows," said Maynard, setting the example, with a touch of the serio-comic in his speech and gesture; "age should be venerated," and he bowed quite low to the turtle, who didn't seem to care how much game the boys made of him.

"And to think how we rapped and punched the old fellow to-day," said Drake.

"Yes, and we'll rap and punch him again to-morrow, if he doesn't keep in the middle of the river and swim properly. If he's as old as Claude says he is, he's old enough to learn how to tow the *Slow Poke* properly, and, by Jove, he's got to do it!" declared Wingate, as he picked up a stick near him, a limb about seven feet long, and laid it carefully on the turtle's shell, and then, by the aid of his rule, made out that the shell of the turtle measured just six feet in length, and four feet and one inch in width.

"Who was Baron de St. Castine, any way?" queried Wood.

"I'll be hanged if I know," replied Drake.

"He was a French nobleman," remarked Claude, "who came to Canada in the sixteenth century, and, leaving his companions, joined the Penobscot Indians, and married into the tribe."

"I don't admire his taste," said Le Roy.

"Perhaps you would if you had seen the girl," laughed Foster.

The turtle was now left to his own companionship, and, while Robbins and Maynard were getting supper,

the other members of the party brought in some fuel and arranged a rather primitive shelter for the night.

Sunday morning the cook did not wake very early, and, as no one felt inclined to call him, it was nine o'clock before the party sat down to breakfast, and ten before they were ready to resume their voyage.

When the boys had loaded the *Slow Poke*, for everything had been taken off the raft the night before, the turtle, apparently against his will, was persuaded to take again to the water, and he was guided into the middle of the stream, towing the raft at a good speed. The current also was considerably stronger than the day before, and altogether they made very good headway.

During the day they passed several bad places, and once they were hung up for nearly two hours. At five o'clock they reached Comstock Brook, and, passing its mouth, they ran into the river bank a few rods below, and camped on the north side of the St. John.

"Look here, fellows," said Le Roy, after the raft had been tied up, "what does that turtle live on? We have not fed him since we captured him, and I should think he would be hungry by this time."

"I'll be hanged if I know what to give him," replied Wingate. "Perhaps he will eat fish and meat. We can try him and see."

"Let him live on faith and air," suggested Drake.

"Feed him on wind pudding," advised Wood.

"If you think that kind of diet is healthy, try it yourself," said Maynard.

"Oh, you need not worry about Neptune," remarked

Claude. "I have read that turtles are capable of living a long time without food, so we need not feed him while we keep him, and when we get tired of using him for a towboat we will set him adrift, and he'll take care of himself, I'll warrant."

"He has lived long enough in this world to know how, I should think," put in St. Clair.

When the boys awoke Monday morning, they made two discoveries. First, that the air was full of smoke, and, second, that Neptune had managed somehow to release himself, and leave them. The second discovery was not of much account, as the size of the river and strength of the current had very much increased in the distance they had floated since capturing the turtle, and he would have been more of a nuisance than a help to them in the future, and no one shed tears at his absence.

The smoke, however, was a very serious matter, and promised to be more so if it lasted long. It was almost as bad as fog, and they could scarcely discern the opposite side of the river, while the smell of it was anything but agreeable.

Maynard and Le Roy were the cooks for the week, and they prepared breakfast as rapidly as possible, in order that the party might leave their present location at the earliest possible moment, in the hope that as they drifted down river they would run out of the smoke.

"Where do you suppose this smoke comes from, Claude?" inquired Wood, who had never witnessed anything of the kind before.

"I can't tell you, Dave. Probably the forest is on fire to the east or north of us, but I am in hopes that a few miles floating will take us beyond it."

"I hope the fire will not reach us," said Drake. "If it does, we shall be burnt like rats in a hole."

"Not so bad as that, I guess," asserted Wingate. "If it gets too hot for us, we shall have to take care of ourselves somehow."

CHAPTER XII.

THE BURNING FOREST.

THE *Slow Poke* started on her fourth day's run at seven o'clock, in such a dense smoke that the sun was invisible. As they went down river, borne by a now rapid current, they would have enjoyed the situation immensely, only from the fact, undoubted by all, that the farther they went the thicker the smoke became, and by eight o'clock they could not see either bank, when the raft was in the middle of the river.

As it was impossible for them to lose their way, however, they floated onward, suffering much annoyance from the smoke, that now began to make their eyes smart, and very much vexed that they could see nothing of the country through which they were passing.

"Confound the smoke!" growled Foster; "I wish it was in Jericho."

"Well, it's done us one good turn," remarked St. Clair, "for I have not seen a mosquito, a black fly, or a midge to-day."

"I hope it will kill every one there is in Maine," added Wood, savagely, who had suffered more from the bites and stings of insects than any other fellow in the party.

"Amen!" shouted Drake.

About noon the wind began to blow, and soon increased to a gale. In hope of clearing the smoke before night, the entire party voted to skip the dinner, and make the best headway possible down river.

"I would be willing to go without dinner and supper both," declared Le Roy, "if we can only get beyond this smoke before we turn in to-night, for I am afraid we shall smother if we don't."

"I am afraid there will be no sleeping for any of us to-night," replied Claude, with a very sober face. "I think we are getting into a mighty bad scrape. Don't you notice fine cinders are beginning to come with the smoke, which shows that the fire is getting nearer to us?"

"That's so, as true as I'm alive," remarked Robbins.

The friends stared each other in the face, but nothing was said, and for some time they floated on in silence, each busy with thoughts of the difficult and dangerous situation that they felt sure was fast approaching them, and trying to think of some feasible way of escaping it.

By three o'clock, the cinders came so large and fast that they frequently set the clothing of some member of the party on fire, and Claude declared it was not safe to travel any longer, for, beside the cinders, the roaring of the fire could now be distinctly heard, although it was yet a long distance away.

"Steer in toward the right bank, fellows, and let us see what it looks like. We can't stand this a great while longer. The air is fairly getting hot."

When they reached the shore, they found the bank

was about six feet high, and the ground in the vicinity meadow land.

"This is a most fortunate thing for us. This grass will burn easily, and we must start a back fire, as they do in the West, when travellers are caught on a burning prairie. We can't see, to be sure, how far back this intervale land runs from the river, but it must be fifteen or twenty rods at least, and that will save us;" and, pulling out a match, Claude touched the dried grass, and in a minute it was in flames.

As soon as it had burned back from the river thirty or forty feet, Claude said:—

"Now, fellows, find anything you can that is suitable to dig with, for we must get a hole of some kind large enough for us all to get into, and take our things beside."

"How about the raft?" queried Wood, anxiously. "Won't it be destroyed?"

"I guess not. The logs are green, and, as there is no timber here to fall on it, I think it will be safe. The cinders may hurt it a little, but I don't believe it will take fire and burn up."

"I know how we can save it," exclaimed Wingate.

"Let us hear," replied Foster.

"We can cover it with three or four inches of dirt."

"A good idea, Charlie," returned Claude, "and now let's to work, and remember you are working for your lives."

Every member of the party realized the fact that Claude had stated, and they took hold with a will.

They divided into two parties, three covering the



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raft with dirt, and the other six digging the hole on shore. The soil was light, and they removed it easily.

After digging down about six feet, they began to tunnel toward the river, leaving a shell of earth about three feet in thickness over their heads, and Claude said, if it should break through on them it was not heavy enough to hurt them much.

In half an hour, Wingate, Maynard, and Le Roy had covered the raft, obtaining their dirt by digging into the bank of the river, about on a level with the tunnel the other boys were at work on; then they went to the place where the others were at work, but found there was no room for them.

"You had better continue digging from your end," advised Claude, "and we shall meet after a while."

His suggestion was acted on, and at six o'clock the two parties came together, and the job was finished shortly after. Their guns, fishing-rods, and ammunition had been placed in a little indentation in the bank, fifteen or twenty feet below the raft, and the remainder of their things they took into their "fire-proof vault"—as Robbins called it—with them.

During their digging, the cinders had increased in size and number, and the boys plainly saw that if they had not provided their underground shelter they would have been burned to death.

As it was, they were uncomfortable enough. For, as evening advanced, the heat increased, and the roar of the fire was terrible. They could hear an occasional crash as some forest monarch bit the ground, and, although there was no timber in their immediate

vicinity, the heat was wafted into their retreat so strong that they were bathed in perspiration.

To get a meal under the circumstances was out of the question, and, as they had nothing cooked, they were forced to try the same kind of food that some of the party had suggested for the turtle, the day before.

Crowded and cramped together, their stomachs faint from their long fasting, they lay and sweltered hour after hour, listening to the roar of the wind and the fire. The smoke also nearly smothered them, and they suffered a great deal from it. Their mouths became parched and dry, and they longed for a drop of the water which those who were nearest the river could hear flowing swiftly past their retreat.

The flames lit up the water, which, on account of the smoke, had a peculiar, sickly, yellow light, and the stream sent forth a constant hissing from the large, red-hot cinders that dropped into it by the thousand.

The boys did not suppose that the fire would cross the river; but, about midnight, some of the underbrush caught from the intense heat and falling sparks, and the flames rapidly spread, lapping up everything along the river bank, and then swept beyond to the heart of the forest.

Just after three o'clock, Claude crawled to the end of the tunnel, at the river bank, and, taking a dipper with him, went down to the stream for a drink. After satisfying his thirst, he noticed that the wind had died down, and that no cinders of any account were falling. Calling to his friends, he informed them that they could come out with safety now; and then, wading into the

river, he plunged under two or three times, the air being so warm that he ran no risk of taking cold. The other members of the party followed his example, and felt greatly refreshed by the bath.

The light from the fire had mostly disappeared, and while the boys were waiting for daylight they scraped the dirt off from the raft, and managed, in spite of the semi-darkness, to get all their things on it.

The smoke was as dense as ever, but as soon as the first rays of daylight penetrated to such an extent that they could see to travel, the raft was pushed from the shore, and they started down river once more.

They had only floated about half a mile when the raft ran into an enormous pine, half burnt, which had fallen from the river bank; and, for the next two hours, they met with constant obstructions of this nature, so that it made the navigation slow and tiresome.

About nine o'clock the smoke began to appear thinner, and, shortly after, they came to a part of the forest where the trees had not all fallen down, although the fire had been in them, and they were all blackened. At half past ten they reached a part of the forest where the trees had been only singed, the foliage being destroyed, but none of the limbs burned, and half an hour afterward they were all out of the smoke, and once more surrounded by a live, green forest.

The party had now been over twenty-four hours without food, and they were suffering from hunger, as well as from excitement, fatigue, and loss of sleep, and when Claude proposed that they should stop at the mouth of a small brook that just then came in sight, on

the east side of the river, they all accepted the proposition with delight.

The raft was secured just below the brook, and Wood and Drake fished from it, while the others helped Maynard and Le Roy with the dinner. A venison stew was made, and a few trout that the boys caught were cooked, and a kettle of tea brewed over the fire, and this was the best, and, in fact, all that the larder afforded.

"How much farther do you think it is to the Seven Islands, Claude?" inquired Maynard, while they were eating dinner.

"I have no idea. The smoke has upset all my reckoning; but after dinner we'll look at the maps, and see if we can tell."

"We shall have to get there mighty quick, or starve, although I suppose we could sustain life on fish if we can catch them. This stew used the last of the meat; there is about a pound of pork left, about two messes of tea, and perhaps half a pint of salt, and that comprises the entire contents of the commissary department."

"We must shoot a deer to-night," suggested Wood.

"You won't catch me shooting any deer," replied the cook. "I never slept a wink last night, and was awake half of the night before, and if I know myself, and I think I do, I am going to turn in early to-night."

"Then we shall have nothing but trout for supper?" inquired Foster.

"You will be lucky if you get trout for supper," returned Le Roy. "All that were caught before dinner

have been eaten; and, if we have any for supper, somebody will have to catch them."

"Here is the map," said Claude, spreading it open on the ground; "and now we can judge from it pretty nearly where we are. Yesterday morning we left Comstock Brook, and we floated steadily until three o'clock, and then we were on the river five or six hours before we stopped. Now, you see, here are a number of small streams emptying into the river on the east side, in township eleven, and I calculate that we are somewhere along here, about in the middle of the township."

"I think you are right, Claude," said St. Clair, who was looking over his shoulder, and studying the map attentively; "but you notice in the township north of us, twelve, there is an island in the river, close to the south line, and when we reach that island we can tell where we are, any way."

"And it can't be more than twelve or fifteen miles to the Seven Islands from there."

"We surely can do that in a day," remarked Wingate, "unless that part of the river is worse than anything we have seen yet."

"The next question is, are we going any farther to-day?" and Le Roy looked around to see what his friends thought.

"I say yes, for one!" cried St. Clair, looking at his watch. "It's only two o'clock, and if we are right in our conclusions as to where we are now, we ought to reach that island considerably before dark. It can't be more than five or six miles from here."

"There's no use in snoozing our time away here like a lot of pigs," declared Robbins. "I am of Andrew's mind; I say, let's start for the island, and the sooner we are under way the sooner we shall get there."

The other members of the party expressed themselves willing to move on, for the three-hours rest they had taken had refreshed them considerably, and in fifteen minutes they were again navigating the *Slow Poke* toward the Seven Islands.

They had a good current the rest of the afternoon, with occasional rapids and shoals, but none that gave them any special trouble, and Claude calculated that the old raft made at least two miles an hour. They did not try to propel their ungainly craft ahead any, but only kept it in the strongest part of the current.

About four o'clock they rounded a sharp bend, and, as they caught a glimpse at the river beyond, they were delighted to see a very large caribou come out of the woods, from the east, and take to the water.

The animal was not more than six rods away, and before he was twenty feet from the shore the boys opened a perfect fusillade on him, sending at least half a dozen bullets into him, and he died almost instantly.

The raft was paddled up to him as quickly as possible, and he was hauled up on it. The animal must have weighed five or six hundred pounds, and it was all the boys could do to get him out of the water. As it only needed three or four to manage the *Slow Poke*, the others turned their attention to the caribou, and proceeded to skin him and cut him up.

At ten minutes past five they sighted the island they

were looking for, and, after passing it, steered the raft in to the eastern bank, and made it fast.

Maynard and Le Roy hastily began preparations for supper, while the other members of the party provided a shelter and cut some fuel. There was no time for fishing, and some nice steaks were cut from one of the hindquarters of the caribou, and broiled over a bed of coals; and that, with a cup of tea, formed the supper.

After the meal was over, Maynard and Le Roy took care of the caribou meat, so that it would be safe from the visits of any wild animals during the night, and between eight and nine the whole party retired to rest, glad enough for a chance to lie down where they stood a show for a decent night's sleep. The last two days had been terribly hard ones for some of the members of the club, and only that they were so short of provisions Claude would have persuaded them to have rested that afternoon, instead of coming to the island. But, being out of groceries of every kind, he thought that the sooner they reached a place where supplies could be bought, the better it would be for all hands, for every fellow in the crowd was longing for a change of diet.

About four o'clock Wednesday morning, they were awakened by swarms of midges, and, after trying to fight them without getting up, were compelled to turn out and start a smudge.

"Great Scott!" exclaimed Wood, as he besmeared his face and hands with fly preparation, "I should think a midge had died here, and that all there were left in Maine had come to his funeral."

"It is quite evident the fire did not destroy them all," remarked Drake. "But, as long as I am up so early, I am going to cast a fly awhile, and see if I cannot raise a few trout."

"I'll go with you, if you have no objection," said Wood.

"Not the slightest. We can fish an hour or so before breakfast will be ready." And the two boys took their rods and fly-books, and one landing-net, and went up the river a few rods, to the head of the island, where the water looked favorable for trout.

By the advice of Claude, Maynard and Le Roy cooked enough of the caribou meat for breakfast and dinner, so that they would not have to spend the time at noon in making a fire. This used one of the fore and hind quarters, and the others were cut up into junks and put in a bag, so the meat could be kept out of the sun.

"We shall use the last of the tea this morning, and I hope we shall reach the Seven Islands to-night. I wish to get to that farm as soon as possible, and see what we can find in the way of supplies. I shall forget how bread tastes if we don't get some flour soon."

"By Jove!" exclaimed Wingate, "I wish we had some hot biscuits for breakfast this morning; wouldn't they taste boss!"

"Oh, shut up!" cried Le Roy, "what do you want to tantalize a fellow for?"

"I hope we can buy some coffee," said Robbins; "I miss that more than anything else."

"I doubt very much if we can get any coffee," remarked Claude, "or, at least, any that we would care

to drink. The coffee they have back here in the wilderness is mighty poor stuff. Not much like the Mocha and Java we brought with us, but I do think we can get the tea, and that will be much better than drinking cold water all the time."

"We must buy all the provisions at Long Lake that we can get," declared Foster, "for I doubt if we can get any more until we reach Fort Kent, and that is a confounded long way from the Seven Islands."

"I go in for buying all we can get," said St. Clair, "but after we get down the river, a few miles below the Seven Islands, we shall come to a farm occasionally, and we can buy a few things from every farm that we come to."

"I know one thing," added Robbins, "and that is, that it takes quite a pile of grub to run this crowd."

"Which nobody will deny," sang Wingate. "But I don't care how much it takes, if we can only get it."

"Will somebody call those fishermen?" inquired Maynard. "Breakfast is ready."

"You're in luck, Maynard, to be cook this week," bantered Le Roy. "You don't have anything to cook."

"All the same, I don't like it. I had rather get up a meal of a dozen courses than cook such a breakfast as this," and the *chef* looked disgusted as he gazed upon the one article of which the meal was composed.

Foster went down to the river, and gave a yell for the fishermen, that could have been heard half a mile, or less, and in about ten minutes they made their appearance, looking rather glum, and with the landing-net empty.

"Where are your trout?" queried Maynard.

"In the river," answered Wood.

"Forgot to bring them up, didn't you?" asked Wingate.

"We were afraid they would spoil if we took them out of the water," declared Wood.

"You and I should have gone fishing," said Foster to St. Clair, "and then we should have had some trout for breakfast."

"Nobody objected to your going," remarked Drake.

"True," replied St. Clair, "but, after you had spoken of going, we hated to start and catch all the fish."

"Don't stand there chaffing all day," cried Maynard. "You had better eat your caribou steak while it is hot, for you will have a cold lunch for dinner."

Breakfast was over by six o'clock, and thirty minutes afterwards the *Slow Poke* again started toward the ocean. After a two-hours run, they passed another small island, and, shortly after, the mouth of a small stream that emptied into the river from the east side.

"What stream is that?" inquired Wood, as they passed by its mouth.

"Can't tell you, Dave," replied Claude. "None of these small streams have names on the maps, and they probably don't amount to much."

"We ought to name them," suggested Drake.

"I doubt if the names would stick," remarked Wingate, laughing.

"What do you suppose has become of the sheriff and his party?" asked Foster of Claude.

"I'm sure I don't know. If they found their men

at the Depot Farm, they may have started back and been caught in the fire."

"If they were, I hope those two scoundrels were roasted, and that the others escaped," said Wingate.

"What a speech, Charlie! You don't mean that," replied Claude.

"Yes I do, too. Didn't they try to burn us alive?"

"No denying that. But you don't wish to make yourself as bad as they were, do you?"

"I was not proposing to burn them myself. I only wished for them to be burned."

"But the thought is father to the act, and you are placing yourself on a level with them, even by making such inhuman wishes. There is a good deal of froth about you at times," and Claude laughed, "for you know, if you had those men for instance in a log camp out here in the forest, and they were helpless to prevent it, you would no sooner set the building on fire than I would."

"I don't suppose I would," finally replied Charlie, after a few minutes' silence, and his friends all laughed at the way Claude had floored him in the argument.

"What I am the most anxious about is our boats," remarked Le Roy. "How can we continue our trip without them. I have had about all I want of the *Slow Poke*. She is altogether too lumbering a craft to suit me."

"Of course, she's a lumbering craft," chipped in Wood, quickly; "she's built of logs."

"Bosh!" cried Le Roy.

"I hope we shall recover them," spoke up Claude,

"for, if we don't, it will be quite a loss to us, beside the inconvenience we shall be subjected to. Probably we might hire a bateau, or some kind of a boat, of the man who lives on the farm at Long Lake, but it would not be like having our own."

"And it would be so infernally heavy to lug if we made any carries," suggested Wingate.

Just then the *Slow Poke* shot into a heavy rapid, and it took the energies of all the crew to get her through in safety. There was hardly water enough for her. Twice she grounded on the rocks, and could not be started until four of the fellows went into the river and lifted on the hind end, and then they worked her off.

Soon after this incident they reached a sandy shoal, and all were compelled to get out and wade for some distance, as the raft would not carry her load without dragging on bottom.

This was one of the hottest days the boys had seen while out on the trip; there was not a breath of air stirring, and the rays of the sun almost scorched them, as they were entirely unprotected from it.

"Do you have any hotter weather in Florida than this, Robbins?" inquired St. Clair, as he mopped his face with a pocket-handkerchief. "If you do, I don't care to live there."

"I have never seen a day, since I lived there, that I felt the heat worse than I do to-day. If there was only a little breeze, it would not be nearly as bad."

"Half past twelve," remarked Drake. "How about something to eat, Maynard?"

"We can have what there is, any time; shall we

keep the raft in motion while we lunch, or go on shore?"

"Oh, keep the old thing running. If there is any chance to reach those islands, which I begin to think a myth, let's do it to-night, or 'bust,'" said Wingate.

"I think we had better keep our craft under way," agreed Claude. "Two can steer her, and Charlie and I will do it, while the rest of you eat. Then some of you can relieve us, and we can take our luncheon, for it would be a stretch of courtesy to call it a dinner."

"I object to that!" declared Maynard. "Let Le Roy and me run the *Slow Poke*, and the rest of you eat. There is such a tremendous variety that you don't need any waiting upon to-day," laughing, "and then we will eat when some of you are ready to spell us."

"Let us wait," said Wingate. "I don't object."

"I know that," replied Maynard. "But Le Roy and I will have to wash the dishes and clear up, so we would rather wait, and navigate this racer."

"Racer!" cried Foster, contemptuously; "a snail would beat her."

"Always speak well of a bridge that carries you safely over a stream," remarked St. Clair. "And if the *Slow Poke* lands us in safety at the Seven Islands, she deserves our thanks instead of condemnation."

"I agree with you," said Claude, "the old raft has done us a good turn."

The party had considerable fun over their meagre meal, and laughed and joked with as much spirit as the intense heat would allow.

"I suppose the Frenchmen who first came to

Canada named this river," ventured Drake, with an interrogative look at Claude.

"Of course they did," replied the leader of the party, "or it would not, in my opinion, have been called the St. John River. You will find the name of every saint that was ever heard of, read of, or dreamt of, by any member of the Roman Catholic Church, applied to something or other in Canada. It pans out well for saints, I tell you."

About two o'clock a gentle breeze sprang up, and made the heat more endurable. The boys hoped there might be a shower before night, but the sky did not look like it, and not a cloud appeared in the patch of sky open to them.

"By the Great Horn Spoon!" exclaimed Maynard, about three o'clock, "I see an island ahead."

"So do I," "And I!" cried several others.

"Do you suppose that is one of the seven, Claude?" asked Wood.

"I don't know, but I hope so, any way. Let's take a look at one of the maps."

Claude spread one out, and the boys scanned it eagerly.

"Why, there are eight islands," remarked Wood. "And this one we are coming to, by the scale of the map, should be a mile and a half long."

"There are seven all together, beyond the long one," pointed out Wingate. "Probably this large one don't count."

"Which side of it had we better go?" queried Robbirs, who was, at the moment, one of the steersmen.

"We'll decide when we get closer to it," replied Claude.

Fifteen minutes brought the raft up with the head of the island; and Claude and Wingate concluded the water looked the best on the starboard side, and the raft was accordingly headed for the right-hand channel.

"We must be careful, fellows, and not pass by the road," said Le Roy.

"That's so," agreed St. Clair. "We had better keep on the right-hand side of the river the rest of the way, and when we get where we think the road is, we can go on shore and look it up."

All agreed that this was good advice, and it was acted upon, as far as the condition of the river would allow. Sometimes they had to shift to the left side on account of deeper water being found there, or to avoid some boulder that was planted on the starboard side of the stream.

Rapids and shoals were numerous, and their progress was slow after they cleared the "Long Island," as they christened it, and it was not until six o'clock that they reached the place where the road crossed the river.

They gave three cheers when they found they were really at the road, and within reasonable walking distance of a human habitation.

CHAPTER XIII.

A BEAR HUNT.

AFTER their things had been carried on shore, there was quite a hot and lengthy argument as to whether they should camp where they were, or try to walk to the Depot Farm that night.

The younger members of the party were in favor of starting for the farm at once, and trying to get some supper after they reached it. Wood said they would have the moon all the way, and that they could get there easily enough.

Wingate claimed it would take from four to six hours to walk the distance, especially in the night, and that the people living at the farm would not care to be turned out at midnight to get supper for nearly a dozen hungry fellows who would eat all before them.

The more they talked, the further they drifted from a conclusion; and Claude finally proposed that they take a vote on the question, the defeated party to accept the result cheerfully, and make no more talk about it.

This was agreed to, and a vote taken; the result being that six of the party voted to camp where they were, and three to go forward to the farm. This settled the matter, and Maynard and Le Roy built a fire and began cooking some of the caribou meat for supper,

while the others busied themselves in cutting firewood and preparing a shelter for the night.

Thursday morning, Foster and St. Clair arose early, and went off by themselves fishing, and returned just before breakfast was ready with twenty nice trout, weighing on an average half a pound each.

"Here, Maynard," said St. Clair, as the two fishermen walked up to the fire, where the cook was broiling his caribou steaks, "are some trout. They are all cleaned, and you had better cook them for breakfast. It will be a little better than the caribou alone."

"That is so," acknowledged the cook. "I should not mind eating a trout myself."

"Hullo!" cried Wood, who now caught sight of the trout. "Where did you take those fish, Billy?"

"Took them here to the cook, so we could have them for breakfast," answered Foster.

"Nonsense! I mean where did you catch them?"

"Caught them out of the water," replied St. Clair.

"I'll bet five dollars you didn't," laughed Wingate, who had heard Andrew's remark; "I'll bet you caught them in the water. You don't often catch trout out on the land."

"What are you fellows indulging in, a hair-splitting match?" queried Claude, coming up to the group.

"No," replied Foster; "we were only trying to convince Dave and Rob that it took fishermen to catch fish, and then Charlie had to poke his nose into the mess."

"Breakfast!" cried Le Roy at the top of his voice, and the fellows stopped their argument and sat down at the table.

"Shall we leave any of our things here?" inquired Wood, while they were eating.

"I don't think it best to do so," replied Maynard. "We can easily carry our blankets, guns, rods, etc., and the cooking utensils can be divided between us. There is only a little of the caribou meat left, not more than twenty or twenty-five pounds, and we can take turns in carrying that."

"If it's as hot as it was yesterday, it will make us sweat some before we get there," declared Drake; "twelve or fifteen miles is a pretty good walk with a load."

"And yet you wanted to try it after six o'clock last evening," bantered Robbins.

"Because I thought it would be cooler."

"It is not going to be so hot to-day," asserted Claude. "The wind is coming out from the northwest, and we shall have quite a comfortable day for August."

"That is to say," added Le Roy, with a laugh, "that it is going to be a very Au-gust day."

"That's stale!" shouted Foster.

"I hope the road is perfectly plain," remarked Drake. "After losing our boats, narrowly escaping being burned to death, and half starved, I don't care to get lost in the woods."

"Half starved!" cried Maynard; "well, if you haven't gall, I wouldn't say so. After eating two or three trout, and four or five pounds of caribou meat for breakfast, you must be very near a starving condition. If you feel very weak, I'll be one to help carry you."

"Go hire a hall," retorted Drake, "and empty yourself of wind. I was not speaking to you, anyhow. Some people are always shoving their oar in where it is not wanted."

"I don't think we shall get off the road," remarked Claude, laughing at his friends' chaffing. "It is plainly laid down on the map, and I think we can follow it easily enough. It has been a winter road for years, and must be well defined. Anyhow, I will guarantee to pilot you to the farm safely, if you'll follow me."

"This may have been a winter road once, but it is a summer road now," grinned Foster.

"Idiot!" cried Le Roy. "Now, I'm even with you, you sardine."

"If he's a sardine, let's can him," suggested Wood.

"We can't," said Drake.

"Why?"

"We have no cans."

"Of course we can't can him, if we have no cans, can we?" added Le Roy.

"Shades of Belshazzar! I can't stand this," remarked Maynard, and, swinging his dish-cloth around dripping wet, he took Le Roy in the face, and then added, "Now, if you fellows are going to keep on talking like drivelling idiots, get out of my hearing, or there'll be a funeral in this family, and I shall be chief mourner."

"Confound you, Frank," sputtered Le Roy, as the boys roared at the cook's act of vengeance, "I owe you one, and I'll pay you before night, or you may work me

up into fish balls," and he went down to the river and washed his face.

At seven o'clock, the boys had their packs slung upon their shoulders, and took up their line of march for the head of Long Lake, Claude leading the procession.

"I tell you what it is, fellows," said St. Clair, "partridges are large enough to shoot, and we must keep our eyes open. We ought to run across some on this road."

"They must have queer partridges up in this country," remarked Wood, with a twinkle in his eye.

"How so?" queried Robbins.

"Why, Andrew said they were large enough to shoot, and I never heard of partridges shooting before."

"There's another case of dish-cloth, Frank!" laughed Claude.

"Yes, I only wish I had it full of greasy water, and I'd quiet that blockhead."

"Say, fellows, I've got a conundrum for you," puffed Drake, as he staggered along under what was really a heavy load for him.

"Keep it, then," growled Le Roy, who was still thinking of Maynard and his dish-cloth.

"Oh, let him fire it off," assented Foster, "he'll have less load to carry then."

"Spit it out, Bob," advised Robbins.

"Why would a cock partridge make a good member of a military band?"

"Give it up," cried St. Clair.

"Because he's a capital drummer," said Wood, with a smile of satisfaction.

"Tell us when to laugh, Rob," bantered Le Roy.

"Some people don't possess that faculty," retorted Drake.

About half past eight, they reached a stream that ran across the road. They were all thirsty and gladly took the opportunity to get a drink.

Le Roy watched Maynard, and, just as they reached the middle of the brook, he tripped Frank up, who came down full length in the bed of the stream, where the water was about six inches deep, and, of course, he got a thorough ducking.

"Now, I've paid my debt," shouted Tommy, as he rushed ahead to keep out of Maynard's way.

"I thought I heard something drop," remarked Robins, as Maynard scrambled to his feet.

"I had that impression myself," laughed Maynard, who did not lose his temper, as many would have done.

At ten o'clock the boys stopped half an hour to rest at a spot where they found an abundance of raspberries, and they improved the time by eating a pint or two of berries each.

"My stars! Aren't these berries delicious?" said Foster, not speaking very plainly, however, for his mouth was full of the fruit.

"I should like about two quarts of them for my dinner," remarked Claude. "If they grow anywhere on that farm, I mean to have some for supper."

"We can all go berrying," suggested Drake, "if there are any in the vicinity."

"And we'll do it too," added Maynard.

As the boys travelled onward, they frequently saw deer tracks in the road, and also those of bears and moose several times. They also came upon two flocks of partridges at different times, but the birds heard them and flew before the boys could drop their packs and get ready to shoot.

"It strikes me, we need not go any farther to find game," remarked Robbins. "Judging by what we have seen in the way of signs on this carry, we can have good sport to stop at this farm awhile."

"If the people will board us, it might be a good idea to stay with them a few weeks," added Claude.

"I go in for that," chimed in Robbins.

"We shall find more partridges in the vicinity of that farm than we shall in the forest; and, if berries are plenty in the vicinity, that will be an additional inducement."

"I can think of another," said St. Clair.

"What is it?" asked Claude.

"Milk and butter. Probably they keep cows, and, if they do, we can get all the milk and butter we want."

"And can live like fighting cocks," cried Wood, gleefully.

"But if they won't board us?" queried Drake.

"If they will let us draw on them for supplies, I don't care whether they board us or not," declared Claude.

As the sun rose higher and higher, the heat began to tell upon the boys in spite of the cool breeze that had befriended them all the way. The road seemed inter-

minable, and their feet ached, while every rag of clothing on them was wet through.

"Talk about it being twelve or fifteen miles to that farm," said Drake, with a snort of contempt. "We have travelled twenty five now."

Claude laughed at Drake's idea of the distance travelled, and then said : —

"My boy, twelve or fifteen miles through the woods is a 'right smart distance,' as they say in the South. But keep up your courage, for we shall certainly get there if we keep on putting one foot before the other. And when we do get there, we will have a good rest."

"I know I shall, for one," asserted Wingate, "and I think we had all better lie off for a day or two, and do nothing but loaf around the house. I want to write up my diary, and mend some of my clothes. I begin to look like a tramp."

"So do all of us, for that matter," laughed Le Roy.

The boys now walked for about a mile in silence. In fact, the weight of their loads, combined with the heat and their constantly increasing fatigue, did not incline them to talk much, and conversation was only kept up spasmodically the rest of the distance.

"The man who says that it is not more than twelve or fifteen miles from the Seven Islands to Long Lake is a liar, and the truth is not in him," remarked St. Clair.

"Nor never was," added Le Roy.

"Amen to that," cried Wood.

"What a fool a fellow will make of himself for fun," growled Drake. "You couldn't hire one of us to

make a mule of himself at home, and yet we have been doing it ever since we started into the woods, and call it pleasure."

"Of course we do," chuckled Robbins. "This is good for your liver, Bob."

"My liver is all right, but I'll be hanged if my feet are. They ache worse than an ulcerated tooth."

"I pity you, then," said Wingate.

"When we reach the farm," encouraged Claude, "we'll have a good dinner, and a rest, and toward night we can take a bath in the lake. Then, get a good night's sleep, and we'll feel like new beings to-morrow."

"I hope we shall," replied Drake, "for I begin to feel about played out. I move we take ten minutes' rest."

"Second the motion," added Wood, swinging his knapsack from his shoulders, and coming to a stop.

"It's a long walk, I know, fellows, and we are carrying pretty good loads, but we can't be a great way from the farm, for it is after twelve o'clock now, I should say for a guess," as he looked at the sun, and then, taking out his watch, announced the time, "quarter past twelve."

"And we have been travelling five hours," asserted Maynard.

"You're wrong, Frank. Not over four, if we have that. We certainly have lost an hour on the road," and Claude bathed his face and hands in fly preparation, for the mosquitoes found the party the moment they stopped, although they did not trouble them much while they were in motion.

"I think it's queer we have not seen anything of the sheriff and his party," remarked Foster. "He told me he was coming back by the river."

"It is queer," acknowledged Drake.

"He was afraid Charlie would capture his prisoners and hang them without judge or jury," declared Claude, giving Wingate a good-natured poke in the ribs.

"They deserve it," said Wingate, with emphasis.

"Come, fellows, let's be poking along," urged Le Roy. "There is a dinner waiting for us somewhere, and we want to find it."

"You're right, we do," agreed Robbins.

The packs were again shouldered, and the boys trudged wearily onward. The sun poured down as fiercely as ever, but occasionally, as they turned an angle in the road, they caught a little whiff of the north-wester, and for a moment it cooled their heated brows and fanned their feverish cheeks.

A few minutes before one, Claude, who was several rods in advance, came in sight of the lake, and, giving a shout of encouragement to the others, waited until they joined him. The sight of the water gave them new courage, and they were soon at the house.

They were lucky enough to find the proprietor, a Mr. Gurney, at home, and asked him the first thing if he could give them some dinner.

"Guess I can, if you'll give me time," was the answer.

"And can we stop with you to-night?" queried Drake.

"Ye can, if the woman's willing. I'll see in a minute.

You're the young fellows the sheriff told me about, I guess, ain't ye?"

"I think likely," replied Claude. "A sheriff and his party stopped with us one night at Baker Lake, and started for this place the next morning, and we have neither seen nor heard from him since. Where is he now?"

"Gone down the Allaguash."

"The dickens he has! He told us he was going back to Moosehead Lake. That is funny."

"Wall, he didn't catch the birds he was after."

"How was that?"

"Great Cæsar's ghost, Claude! are you going to talk here all night, and this crowd starving!" protested Foster. "Now, my good man, order our dinner first, and then I am willing to hear you talk until it is ready. But business first, and pleasure afterwards, especially on this occasion."

"All right. Walk in, gentlemen, and make yourselves to home, and I'll speak to my woman about the dinner."

Mr. Gurney led the way into the house, and, telling the boys to sit down, shuffled away to see about their dinner.

"So it seems the coiners gave the sheriff the slip," remarked Claude.

"It beats the Dutch," replied Charlie. "Those fellows have great luck."

"When the boss comes back, we will buzz him," said Robbins, "and find out how they escaped the officers."

Mr. Gurney soon made his appearance again, and

Claude asked him if he had seen anything of their boats.

"What kind o' looking boats were they?"

Claude gave him a description of them, and, when he had finished, their host said:—

"I have got two o' those boats here now; the other one, the fellows went away in."

"How did they come to leave two of them here? Are they all right?" inquired Maynard.

"Yaas, they're all right. They tried to sell them to me, but, gosh darn it, I didn't believe they come by them honestly, and I wouldn't buy 'em. I kinder thought the owners would turn up before long, and I couldn't just exactly understand how two men came to be travelling through this country with three boats."

"How long were the men here?" asked Robbins.

"Two nights and a day. They came here about seven o'clock, and said they wanted to stay over night. I didn't like the looks of 'em very well, but I told 'em I would put 'em up. The next morning, they bargained for some supplies, and I hauled 'em across to the St. John, and the men showed me the boats, and wanted to sell 'em, but I wouldn't buy. Then they talked by themselves awhile, and the tall one said they'd like to get the boats stored a month or six weeks, and then they'd come back and git 'em. I told 'em all right, and we loaded 'em on the team, and they came back with me to get some pork, which they forgot when I put up the rest of the supplies for them. It was most night when we got home, and they concluded they'd stay here. I weighed out the pork

that night, twenty-five pounds, and we figured up what they owed me, and it came to fifteen dollars. But, darn 'em, they didn't pay it. The little one was goin' ter, and the tall one says, 'Oh, let it go till mornin', when we pay for our keepin', and then we'll settle the bull bill.' Wall, do yer believe it, in the mornin', they didn't make their appearance at grub time, and hang me if they hadn't cleared out, and taken the pork with 'em, and never paid me a cent, consarn 'em!"

"That's just like them," put in Wingate. "They would be sure to beat you, if they could."

"Where did you say the two boats were?" inquired Le Roy.

"Out'n the barn."

"Let's go out and take a look at them," proposed Claude, "and see if they are all right."

The party adjourned to the barn, and found the *Petrel* and *Daisy*, in as good order as when they had been stoben, and glad enough they were at this streak of good luck.

"I suppose we shall never see the *Swallow* again," said St. Clair, "but we are very fortunate to get back two of them. It's a wonder the scoundrels did not stave or burn them up."

"Did those rascals say where they were going?" queried Foster.

"No, they didn't talk much, only to themselves."

"How long had they been gone when the sheriff came?" asked Drake.

"'Bout half a day. The sheriff and his party got here at noon, and inquired 'bout the men. I told

him all I knew 'bout them, which wasn't much, got his party some dinner, and in the afternoon they hired a bateau of me, and started down the Allaguash, in hopes to get ahead of those scamps, and catch 'em."

"Would there be any chance for it?" questioned Wood.

"Sartinly. The sheriff didn't have as far to go. And I wouldn't wonder if he headed 'em off."

"Will he come back this way?" inquired Claude.

"Guess not. He told me, if he caught the scoundrels, he should keep on to Fort Kent, and take the stage to Caribou, where he would strike the railroad. If he did this, he promised to hire a man to bring the boats back."

"That's a queer way to figure," remarked Wingate. "At Fort Kent he would be within twenty miles of the railroad at Edmundston, and Caribou is twice as far."

"But Edmundston is in the Provinces, and the law might have something to do with his action," suggested Claude.

"If there is any chance of the *Swallow* coming back here," declared Maynard, "the thing for this crowd to do is to stop here a reasonable time, and see if we can recover her."

"I agree with you," said Claude.

"How soon do you expect the boats, Mr. Gurney?" inquired Le Roy.

"Wall, it's hard tellin'. But I should say they orter be here by the first of next week."

"Could you board us awhile, Mr. Gurney?" asked Claude.

"Wall, I dunno. I guess so. I'll see what my woman says to-night, and let ye know in the mornin'."

"Is there any game about here?" questioned Wood.

"Slathers of it. Deer, b'ar, and moose, and the caribou are as thick as sheep, over on a bog, a few miles from here."

"How about partridges?" added Drake.

"Lots of 'em. So tame you can knock 'em over with a stick."

"We raised two flocks this morning, and they flew away before we could get a shot at them," declared Wood. "They were as wild as hawks."

"They were not Mr. Gurney's kind," laughed Foster.

Just then a horn sent forth two or three soul-stirring toots, and the landlord turned toward the house. "That's to let ye know dinner's ready," he explained.

The party needed no second summons, but followed their host to the kitchen, where they washed, and then sat down to the table, on which was spread cold roast lamb, hot baked beans, potatoes, and canned corn, Indian and flour bread, and tea all poured out, a cupful to each plate. A large dish of raspberries completed the viands in sight.

It was half past two when the boys sat down, and, as they had not had what Foster called a "square meal" for a long time, they took hold with a will. There was no one to wait on the table, and they helped themselves. Only when any article of food was all eaten, a lady, whom the boys found out afterward was "my woman," would come in and replenish it, and even this service

kept her busy for some time. Mince pie and doughnuts were added for dessert, and when the party arose from the table Claude felt it to be necessary to explain to Mr. Gurney that they did not eat as much at every meal, and told him that they would not want any supper.

They strolled outdoors and sat down in the shade, and Mr. Gurney gave them a good idea of the country, and where they might expect to shoot large game, and advised them to go up the Allagash before they went away, telling them that he knew they would enjoy it.

Claude said that they would see if the *Swallow* was brought back, and, if they recovered the boat, perhaps they would take his advice.

About four o'clock they all went down to the lake and had a bath, and went back to the house feeling a hundred per cent. better. They found some Maine papers two or three weeks old, and they were as glad to read them as if they had been Boston dailies fresh from the press. It was all of a month since they had seen a newspaper.

That night they retired early, and had a refreshing sleep, and when they awoke Friday morning like new beings. Their lameness and soreness were all gone, and they were ready for anything in the way of sport after they had eaten breakfast.

Learning, however, from Mr. Gurney that raspberries were thick but a short distance from the house, they all started out on a berrying expedition, and returned a little after twelve with about fifteen quarts of this delicious fruit, and Mrs. Gurney told them she

would use some of the berries in making pies the next day, to pay them for their trouble.

In the afternoon they took their fishing-rods and guns, and, borrowing a bateau from Mr. Gurney, that they might all be together, went up the pond two or three miles, to the mouth of a small stream, and captured sixty-odd trout; they did not get back to the landing until seven o'clock, and found supper had been waiting for them an hour.

They turned their trout over to their host, and he promised to have them cooked for their breakfast the next morning, and Claude told him they would try and not be so late to supper again.

While they were eating breakfast Saturday, Mr. Gurney came in to see them, and informed them that a bear had killed one of his best sheep during the night, and eaten it more than half up.

"I'm going after him this morning," said their host, and there was blood in his eye when he spoke, "and thought some of yer might like ter go with me."

"I'm your man, for one," declared Wingate.

"And I," "And I," spoke up the others.

"Then, I'll just have the woman put up a little lunch, and we'll get away at once, for we may not get back till night."

While he was attending to the lunch, the boys brought out their guns and rifles, taking what shells they considered necessary.

In a few moments their host appeared, saying, "As all of ye are goin', and ye're all armed, I won't take my rifle, but 'll carry the lunch and do the trackin'."

Mr. Gurney led the way to the barnyard, and showed the boys where Bruin had captured his mutton, and then, getting on the trail, started after the bear, the young hunters following, but making no conversation, for the leader of the hunt thought the bear not a great way off.

The trail led out back of the house for half a mile, and then turned north toward the road. They saw from time to time where the bear had stopped and tried his claws on the trunks of trees, and Mr. Gurney told the boys the bear was a large one.

"We are good for him," whispered Claude, "if he's as large as an elephant."

They came out on the road by some raspberry bushes, and they saw that the bear had taken his dessert at this place, many of the bushes being trodden down and entirely stripped of their fruit.

After eating what berries he wanted, Bruin had started along the road, as his tracks showed, toward the St. John River, and Mr. Gurney thought the bear was not a great distance ahead of them, and cautioned the boys against making unnecessary noise.

The party followed on the trail as fast as possible, but it was warm work, for as the sun climbed higher up the heavens it sent forth a scorching heat, and already the boys were bathed in perspiration.

Gurney strode onward with a long, loping gait, that put the boys upon their mettle to keep anywhere near him, and he stopped occasionally for them to close up with him.

"I should as lief follow a steam-engine as you,"

puffed Claude, during one of these halts, for, although the senior member of the Lake and Forest Club was a good pedestrian, he couldn't begin to make a showing in that line with the backwoodsman.

"I'm walkin' slow now, so you fellers can keep up with me, but, if you want to see me walk a little, I'll show you some day what I can do."

"Don't trouble yourself," remarked Wingate, laughing; "we'll take your word for it."

At a distance of about two miles from Long Lake, the trail turned sharply toward the north again.

"The old beggar is thirsty, and is heading for Moose Brook to get a drink," said the leader of the chase. "We ought to catch him there."

"How far away is the brook?" whispered Claude.

"Not more'n a quarter of a mile. Just be ready ter shoot if we get an eye on him, for it's probable he'll run like a bull calf when he sees us."

The party now proceeded more slowly, and with the utmost caution, Mr. Gurney tracking the bear where the boys could not discern a single sign of his having passed.

In about twenty minutes, they came in sight of the brook; and, listening carefully, heard a noise to the right of them.

Stealing in the direction of the sound, a few moments' travel brought them in sight of the sheep-murderer, who was wallowing in the water like a dog.

"There's the skunk of misery," whispered the guide; "give him Hail Columbus, boys!"

The next moment the bear was on his feet; and, in-

stead of "running like a bull calf," he charged squarely into the middle of the party, knocking down three or four of them, and, snapping at the astonished Gurney, who had never known a bear to act in that manner before, took a piece out of the calf of his left leg, as large as a silver dollar; and then, rearing up, grabbed him with his fore paws.

Wood, Drake, and Le Roy all went down in a heap from the effect of Bruin's charge; and, the moment they could get on their feet, they put a safe distance between themselves and the infuriated animal.

But the others rallied to the aid of Gurney, who was getting harshly treated, and, watching their chances, for it was dangerous shooting on account of the bear and the guide being in such close intimacy, finally put bullets enough into Bruin to make him give up the ghost.

As a western man would say, Gurney had decidedly the worst of the scrimmage; for, beside losing a piece out of his leg, he had been badly scratched and squeezed, and would most certainly have been killed had it not been for the timely service rendered him by his young friends.

Like many of his class, Gurney had always had a great contempt for bears, especially at the idea of their being dangerous, but, as an experienced old bear-hunter, who had killed and trapped nearly fifty, once told me, "you never can tell just what a bear is going to do until he does it."

"Consarn his ugly pictur," remarked Gurney, as he sat down on the animal's carcass, and examined his

wounds; "he's given me a chawin' and scratchin' that I sha'n't get over for a week. You boys have done me a good turn, and I sha'n't forget it."

Claude took his handkerchief, and bound it around Gurney's leg, and then helped him limp to the brook, where he washed the blood off his face and arms.

"We ought to be ashamed of ourselves," acknowledged Claude, "that we didn't kill him the first time we fired. He was not over three rods away from us."

"Probably some of us did hit him," replied Maynard, "but not in a very vital part."

"I can swear that he had vitality enough when he charged on us," added St. Clair, dryly.

They now returned to the bear, and, upon looking him over, found that he had ten bullet holes in his hide; which was proof that some of the shots from their first fire had not been lost upon him.

"Do you think you can walk home, Mr. Gurney?" inquired Claude. "If you can't, we'll rig up some kind of a stretcher, and carry you."

"Thunderation! I guess I can walk, but," with an attempt at humor, "I guess you can distance me goin' back."

Le Roy, Wood, and Drake now came up, looking rather sheepish.

"Had a sudden call to business, didn't you, Dave?" queried St. Clair, a little roguishly. "You'll find your gun over there in the bushes. You were in such a hurry you forgot to take it."

"Well, I was in a hurry," acknowledged Wood.

"After that great brute knocked me over, I thought the sooner I got beyond his reach, the better."

"What was the matter with you, Tommy?" laughingly questioned Claude; "I never saw you show the white feather before."

"I expect I caught the panic from those two cowards," replied Le Roy, very red in the face. "You won't catch me running from danger again."

"That's right, lay it all on us," said Drake. "You ran farther than either of us."

"That is because I am a better runner," answered Le Roy.

"Don't you feel bad, young man," remarked Mr. Gurney; "when I saw that b'ar tryin' to lap my face, I'd 'a' run myself if I'd had a chance."

"What are you going to do with the bear?" queried Wood.

"Carry him to the farm," answered Claude.

"My stars!" exclaimed Drake. "He's awful heavy."

"He's a big un," added Gurney. "I'd only tote him out to the road, for he'll weigh nigh onter six hundred. Then I'll hitch up a hoss this afternoon, and you can come and get him."

Some of the boys were not sorry to avoid carrying the bear two miles, and, taking the guide's advice, they, not without considerable labor, lugged him out to the road; and, after covering him with boughs, the party, who were now hungry, although it was only ten o'clock, ate the lunch Gurney had brought, and then started for the farm, accommodating their pace to that of their host, who could only hobble slowly.

"When we get to the house," said Gurney, "I've got sumthin' that I'll put on my leg, that'll make it feel better."

"Don't you have any man but yourself around the farm?" inquired Claude.

"Yes, I've a young Frenchman helpin' me. His name is Dan Moir. He's gone to Ashland, but he'll be back Sunday."

It was a little after twelve when they reached the house, and the boys waited and then carried chairs outdoors, and sat down for a rest, while the wounded man hobbled off to order dinner, and take care of the wound in his leg.

While the boys sat chatting, awaiting the call to dinner, St. Clair suddenly burst out laughing, and his sides fairly shook with merriment.

"You seem to be feeling funny," remarked Claude. "What is it tickles you, Andrew?"

"I was thinking of the way Wood travelled after the bear knocked him down," and he burst into another gale of laughter, in which his friends joined.

"Oh, yes, laugh away," cried Wood; "I suppose I never shall hear the last of that bear."

"Who is going after him this afternoon?" inquired Claude.

"It will take five or six to load him on the sled."

"Sled," laughed Drake. "You mean wagon."

"No, I don't; I mean sled. They do half their hauling around here on a sled."

"What, in summer?"

"Yes."

"Then, to be consistent," put in Wood, "they do their hauling in winter on wheels, I suppose."

"But they are not consistent," returned Claude, dryly, "so they haul on sleds in winter also."

"I'll go, for one," agreed Wingate, and all the others volunteered, thinking they might find partridges, or see something else to shoot.

At one o'clock, the horn tooted, and the party were on their feet in an instant.

"They don't seem to use a dinner-bell in this hotel," remarked Maynard.

"I should think Gurney would hate to have his wife drink so," spoke up Robbins, as they started for the house.

"Drink!" exclaimed all his friends, fairly coming to a standstill in their astonishment.

"Yes, drink. Since we've been here, to my certain knowledge, she's taken a horn three times a day," and the joker escaped quickly through the door to escape the punishment he merited.

"You deserve to lose your dinner for that remark you made outside," laughed Maynard when they were seated at the table.

For dessert, they had some of the raspberry pies that "my woman" had promised them, and the boys voted Mrs. Gurney a brick.

That afternoon Le Roy, Drake, and Wood changed their minds and went fishing, while the others of the party went after the bear.

Claude and his companions returned first, and found Gurney busy building a fire outdoors over his bean-

hole, to cook the beans in that night. He went to the barn and helped them hang up the bear, and said he would skin it in the morning.

At six o'clock the fishermen returned with twenty trout, most of them under a pound in weight.

Le Roy told the friends who had not been with him that, while his two companions and himself had been on shore, they had seen a bobcat, and they had stored it, not having their guns, but it had escaped them.

Sunday was passed quietly about the house, the boys taking the opportunity to mend their clothing and do a little washing.

They talked with Mr. Gurney about the stores they needed, and he promised to let them have anything they wanted that he had on hand. He gave them a great deal of information about their future course down the St. John River, and gave them the names of several farmers who lived along the stream, from whom they could purchase some articles of food, and who would probably board them a short time, if they became tired of camping out.

The young Frenchman returned during the day, and gave the boys an interesting account of his trip to Ashland, and brought a few newspapers, which the boys eagerly devoured in a literary sense.

Monday was a showery day, and the party kept to the house the most of the time, as the rain was very heavy during the showers. About four o'clock, two men appeared with Mr. Gurney's bateau and the *Swallow*, and the boys were glad enough to see their boat once more.

They questioned the men eagerly in regard to the sheriff and whether he had captured the men, and the man who had been hired to bring back the boats gave them all the information he possessed.

It seemed from his story that the sheriff and his party reached the mouth of the Allaguash, half a day ahead of the coiners, but as they did not know whether their men were ahead or behind, the officers concluded to wait half a day, and then go on. They concealed their bateau; and, after waiting a little over five hours, saw the coiners coming down the river.

The moment the *Swallow* had passed, the sheriff and his party launched the bateau, and started in pursuit, and came up with the boat just before it landed on the Canadian side of the river, which the coiners had headed for the moment they found they were pursued.

The sheriff's force overawed them, and they made no attempt to fight, and were secured and ironed, and taken into the bateau. Then two of the sheriff's party changed into the *Swallow* and kept along with the bateau. They stopped at a Mr. Savage's, and there the sheriff left the boats.

It was Sunday night when he reached Savage's, and he left there on the stage Monday morning for Fort Kent and Caribou, instead of running down the river to Fort Kent.

The man who told the story was working for Savage at the time, and the sheriff had hired him to return the boats to Long Lake.

The day before he was to start, a man had come to Savage's who was coming up on the Allaguash explor-

ing, and Smith had hired the explorer, whose name was Brown, to help him get the boats back. The *Swallow* was so light that they had brought her the most of the way in the bateau, as they found it bothered them to tow the smaller boat. The sheriff had only paid for returning the bateau, and the boys settled with Mr. Smith for bringing back the *Swallow*.

Strange to say, she had not been injured any, with the exception of the paint being scratched a little, and this damage could easily be made good.

That evening the boys had a talk over their future movements, and concluded that, as they liked pretty well where they were, they would stay at the Depot Farm until the 1st of September, more especially as the flies and mosquitoes were uncomfortably thick in the woods.

There was a good chance to make excursions from where they were, and they passed the following two weeks in fishing, partridge-shooting, and berrying, and made trips to the different lakes and ponds in the vicinity, sometimes being away for a night or two.

During this time they ran across considerable large game, but did not kill any of it, for as their host furnished them with plenty of meat, and they could catch all the trout they wanted, they had no good excuse for breaking the law, and the entire party were firm believers in the State laws for the preservation of fish and game.

While boarding at the Depot Farm, they were surprised one day by visitors. Three young fellows from New York, each with a guide and a canoe, stopped at

the house for supplies, and Mr. Gurney furnished them. They were there two hours, and the boys had a pleasant chat with them, exchanging their experiences with the new-comers.

The New Yorkers were much pleased with the boats belonging to the boys, and Claude told them he considered them preferable to canoes.

Mr. Barton, the oldest one of the new-comers, told the boys they were going down the Allaguash and St. John as far as Edmundston, and then they would take the cars for home. He was surprised when Claude told him that his party did not expect to leave for home before the 1st of November, and expressed the wish that he could have as much time at his disposal.

When the canoe men left, the boys went down and saw them off, and wished them good luck on the rest of their trip.

This meeting with the New York party was a very pleasant incident in their stay at Depot Farm. For it seemed to them for a short time that they were in actual communication again with the outside world, but the departure of their whilom friends dispelled it.

CHAPTER XIV.

DOWN RIVER — A BIG FISH.

THE party prolonged their stay at Depot Farm until September 1, spending their time mostly on short excursions, that allowed of their returning to the house the same evening, but on one or two occasions they were away over night.

On the evening of the last day of August, while they sat yawning around a smudge outdoors, Drake suddenly spoke up.

"Fellows, what is the use of staying here any longer. We have seen all there is to see for twenty miles about here in every direction, and, if we do not intend to settle down here the rest of our lives, and become bushwhackers, it is time we were moving on. Did you know that to-morrow is the first day of September?"

"Open time for partridges," interrupted Wood.

"Suppose it is the 1st of September," answered back Le Roy. "We are having a good time here, and the flies and mosquitoes are growing scarcer every day. Besides, what do you want to start in the middle of the week for? To-morrow is Wednesday. Let us wait until Monday."

"Oh, hang waiting," remarked Foster. "I think we have stopped here about long enough myself, and we can just as well start on Wednesday as any other day, and I go in for packing up to-night."

"Suppose we take a vote on it," proposed Claude, smiling.

"That's the talk. That's the way to settle it," cried several of the party.

The vote was then taken, and the ballot resulted in six votes in favor of leaving the farm the next morning; as this was a majority, the matter was decided.

After the question was settled, the boys began at once to make preparations to resume their trip. Everything was packed up, and Mr. Gurney was asked for his bill, which Wingate settled, and he also paid for the stores, that had been selected several days before.

According to Wingate's diary, the first day of September broke fair and beautiful, and the boys were up early, and had finished their breakfast at six o'clock.

Then the stores and one of the boats were loaded on the sled, as well as the cooking utensils, and the party started for the Seven Islands once more.

During the walk, St. Clair shot one partridge, Maynard two, and Wingate a rabbit. Several fresh deer and caribou tracks were seen, but the animals themselves kept out of sight.

It was nearly one o'clock when the team arrived at the riverside, and Maynard and Le Roy, who were to cook the remainder of the week, proceeded immediately to get dinner. The long tramp had made the whole party as hungry as bears in the spring, and several of the members assisted the cooks all they could in the preparation of the meal.

The young Frenchman had come with the load that day, as Gurney was at work on a job he wished to fin-

ish by night, but he told the boys he would come himself the next day with the other two boats so as to see them start, and say "good-bye."

During the afternoon, Claude, Maynard, and Le Roy packed up the stores that had been purchased at Depot Farm, in the most compact manner possible for transportation by boat, after laying aside what would be needed at the Seven Island Camp, as the boys called their camp by the river.

Drake, Wood, and Foster took their fishing rods, went down the river two or three miles to fish for trout at the mouth of White's Brook, while the other three of the party started across the river, and tramped along the road a mile or two for partridges.

When the fishermen reached the mouth of the brook, they concluded to go on shore, and follow up the stream a short distance, and see what it looked like.

They took the boat carefully out of the water, and laid it on a smooth place, leaving their rods and other things in it.

"That will be all right until our return," said Foster, as they left the main river, and started up the brook.

The boys travelled along on the north side for a half a mile or more, and reached a point where it forked, the smaller branch coming in from the south side. The walking along the stream was very tiresome on account of the alders and other bushes, and, as they discovered nothing of special interest, they did not go beyond the Forks.

"I've had enough of it," declared Foster, "and it is

half past three now. If we are going to do any fishing, we had better return."

His two companions made no objection to this, and the party immediately retraced their course to the boat. When they came in sight of it, they were much surprised to find one of the largest bears they had yet seen, making a sort of personal inventory of what there was in the boat.

The animal stood with his fore feet inside the *Petrel* and his hind feet on the ground, and was sniffing at everything the boat contained.

"Holy Moses!" exclaimed Foster, in an undertone. "Look at that bear. Isn't he a rouser!"

"Why, he's larger than the one we killed over on the Depot Farm road," asserted Drake, whose face began to show signs of uneasiness. "We ought not to get any nearer to him, for we have nothing to shoot with."

"Confound him!" cried Wood, "he'll break my rod." And indeed one of the bear's great feet was dangerously near it. "I'll frighten him away," and, picking up a fair-sized stone, Dave let drive with all his strength, and with so true an aim that, as the bear raised his head, the rock struck him fair in the nose.

Now, a bear's nose is a very tender part of the animal, and Dave's well directed missile not only hurt Bruin, but it irritated him to such an extent that he at once left the boat, but, instead of running away, as Wood hoped for, the animal turned toward them, and the boys ran for their lives.

They were not more than thirty feet away from the boat when Wood sent the stone thumping against

Bruin's nose, and if they had attempted to run far, the bear would soon have overtaken them, and one of their number at least would have paid the penalty of Dave's indiscreet act.

Foster, who was the eldest of the three, had also had more experience in the woods than either of his companions, and when he saw that the enraged animal meant to attack them without loss of time, he shouted, "Take to a tree!" and he quickly ascended a small white birch, Drake going into a small poplar, and Wood into a large beech.

They were scarcely out of the bear's reach when Bruin arrived on the ground, rushing from tree to tree, as if uncertain which one of the boys to attack first.

"I say, Dave!" shouted Foster, "you're in a bad fix. The bear can climb that tree you are in; you should have picked out a small one."

"Why didn't you say so before?" queried Wood, in a terrified tone. "What shall I do if he comes up after me?"

"Drop from that tree and get into a smaller one, only five or six inches through, and he can't climb it. There's just the tree you want, that maple between Drake and myself."

"I shall break my neck doing that."

"Not if you don't go any higher up the tree. The limb you are on now isn't over eight feet from the ground."

While this discussion was going on the bear made up his mind that Wood was the only one of the party he could get at, and, rearing up on his hind feet, he threw

his fore paws around the trunk of the tree and began to ascend it.

"Don't be frightened, Dave," called Foster, cheerily. "Take hold of the limb over your head, and walk out on the lower one a little way. When the bear gets well up from the ground, drop and run for the tree I showed you."

The tree climbed by Wood was the nearest to the boat of any that the boys had taken refuge in, and a thought suggested itself to Dave as he watched the progress of the bear toward himself.

"I say, Billy!" he called to Foster, "if I can drop out of this tree without accident, I'll make a break for the boat, and row back to camp, and bring some of the fellows down here with their rifles."

"The best thing you can do. If you can accomplish it, you may save our being treed all night."

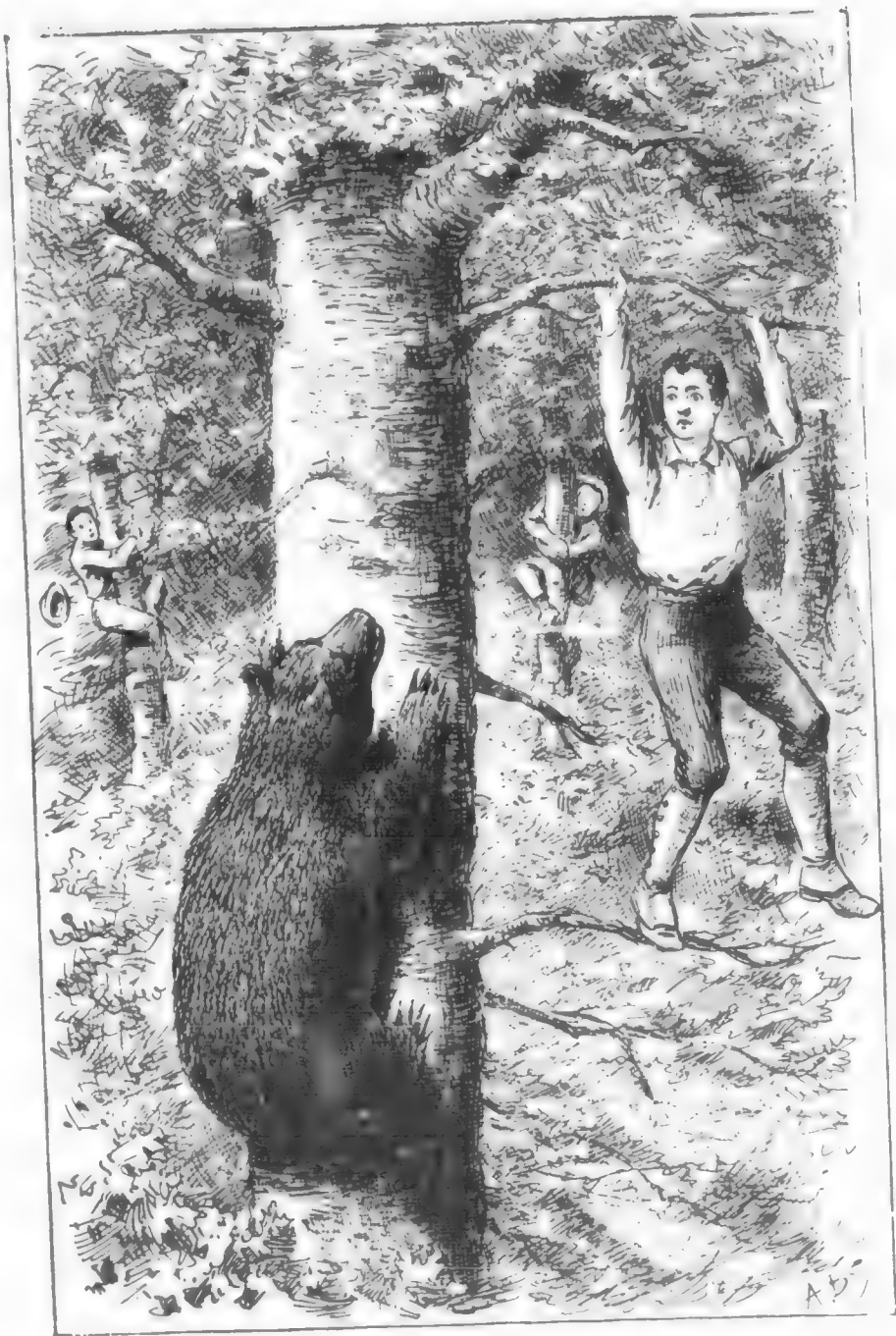
"Look out the bear don't catch you before you get the *Petrel* into the water," warned Drake.

The bear had now climbed to where his hind feet were about on a level with the limb on which Wood was standing, and Dave, swinging his feet from off the limb, dropped three or four feet without letting go of the upper limb, and when it had bent down as far as it would, he released his grip and dropped to the ground, now only a trifle over four feet beneath him, without hurting himself in any way.

The moment he struck the earth he scrambled to his feet and made a dash for the boat.

"Leg it!" cried Foster.

"Run, you sardine!" shouted Drake.



DAVE AND THE BEAR. Page 220.

Wood's fall bothered the bear for a moment, but, seeing that one of his enemies was escaping him, he swarmed backwards down the tree, and, rushing madly after Wood, reached the bank of the river just as Dave had settled down to rowing, and Bruin concluded he had better pay his attention to the two that yet remained, and he returned to Foster and Drake, and tried climbing first one tree and then the other.

When he found that it was an impossibility, he amused himself by trying to shake the boys out of the trees they were in. But the animal did not accomplish that little feat, for the boys, both knowing that they would be at his mercy if once on the ground, would twist their legs and arms around the trees they were in, and hold on for dear life.

The animal was evidently mad clear through, for he passed an hour in vain attempts to dislodge one or the other of his foes, and then, evidently realizing the force of the saying, "that he had bitten off more than he could chew," squatted down on his haunches, about midway between the two boys, apparently to think the matter over.

As the trees the two unfortunates were in were not over twenty feet apart, Bruin did not need any other member of his family to help stand guard, and evidently thought he had a "soft snap."

"This is interesting, Foster," remarked Drake. "I only wish I had been in Dave's place. I am about dead trying to stand with one foot on a little limb and the other on nothing."

"You'll have to bear it," answered Foster, grimly.

"Oh, bite your tongue! A fellow that would joke in the situation we are in would joke on the gallows. How long do you suppose it will be before the fellows will get here?"

"Four or five hours!"

"Then I might just as well get out of this tree now, for I never can stay in it that length of time."

"Oh, yes, you can. A fellow never can tell what he can do until he tries. Are you wearing a belt to-day?"

"Yes."

"Is it long enough to go around your body and the tree both?"

"I think it doubtful."

"Well, try it. If it will go round and just buckle into the first hole, it will prevent your falling out of the tree if you become exhausted."

Drake tried his companion's suggestion, and was overjoyed to find that he could fasten himself to his tree in the manner his friend had spoken of.

"Can you do it?" queried Foster.

"Yes. But it is a tight squeeze."

"Never mind that. You would find it a tighter squeeze if the bear once got his fore paws around you. He would break your ribs, while in the humor he is in now, as easy as you could crush an eggshell."

"I don't intend to give him the chance," replied Drake, whose courage returned when he began to feel safe.

"That's the talk, Rob. Keep a stiff upper lip. The fellows will lose no time in getting here, you may depend. And if Bruin don't get over his mad, and

leave before they come, he will have something better worth getting mad about."

Wood had a hard time in getting back to camp alone, and it was seven o'clock before he reached the landing. The gunners had come in, bringing back five partridges, and supper was all ready, only awaiting the return of the fishermen to be served.

When Wood walked up to the campfire, which he did before his friends noticed him, his excited appearance at once suggested trouble.

"What's the matter, Dave?" cried Claude, springing to his feet. "Neither of the boys drowned, I hope."

"Not so bad as that. They are treed by a bear."

"Treed by a bear?"

"Where?"

"How was it?"

"How long ago?" were a few of the questions that were shot at Dave to answer.

Wood explained the situation in as few words as possible.

Everybody was anxious to rush to the destruction of the bear, and, had the other two boats been there, the whole party would, most assuredly, have gone.

"What is best to do, Claude?" questioned Maynard.

"I think Charlie and I had better return with Dave at once, and, if we cannot kill the bear, frighten him away, so our friends may be released from their unpleasant predicament. There is no fun in roosting in a tree all night, especially a small one."

"You are right," replied Wood. "A little of it went a good way with me."

"You will need a lantern, Claude," suggested Maynard. "It will soon be dark, and you may pass the mouth of the stream without seeing it, if you do not have a light."

"Yes, I will take one. Now, Charlie, get your rifle, and take your gun, Dave, if you wish to do any shooting, and we'll be off."

"Here's the lantern," said Maynard, "and it is full of oil."

"Don't wait supper for us, fellows," called back Claude, as the rescuing party started on their errand of mercy; "eat your supper now, and we will have ours when we return."

"Sit on the middle seat, Dave, and Charlie and I will paddle," said Claude, as the *Petrel* started down the river.

They accomplished about three-quarters of the distance, and then it became so dark that Wood lit the lantern. They kept close in on the left-hand side of the river, and occasionally Wood held the lantern out to see where they were. But, in spite of this, they would have passed the spot where the boys had landed, had Foster not heard them talking, and called to them.

"I say, Claude, is that you?"

"Yes; and Charlie and Dave are with me. Is the bear there yet?"

"Yes, I can hear the old sinner, but I can't see him. It is getting awful dark."

The boys now landed, and pulled up the boat far enough to keep the current from taking her away. Claude carried the lantern and his Winchester rifle,

Charlie had his rifle, also a Winchester, and Dave had his double-barrel gun, loaded with buckshot.

They advanced slowly, in battle array, but the bear began to smell a good-sized mouse, and, before the avengers were near enough to fairly see him, he started into the woods, and not one of the party obtained a shot at him.

Foster and Rob heard Bruin leave, and, calling to their friends not to fire, they came down from the trees where they had been perched so long, but not without difficulty, they were so cramped.

"Gracious! Let me stretch my legs," cried Foster, as he took a few steps back and forth. "I was beginning to grow cold also."

"So was I," added Drake; "I feel real chilly now."

"I am sorry we lost the bear," said Charlie. "If I had not been afraid that I might possibly have hit one of you, I should have sent a shot after him, any way."

"The safest thing was not to shoot," remarked Claude. "We had better have the bear get away than send a bullet into Billy or Rob."

"Correct!" added Drake. "I don't care to become a target for you fellows to shoot at, but I thank you all the same for getting me out of the scrape."

"So do I," chimed in Foster.

"Don't mention it," returned Claude, laughing; "and now, as the bear has gone, we had better go too, for we shall be late enough in getting to camp."

The boys now started for the river, and, launching the boat, began their homeward journey. They made slow progress on account of the current and the dark-

ness, but at ten o'clock they reached the landing near the camp, where their friends anxiously awaited them.

"Did you get the bear?" queried Maynard, as the bow of the boat grounded, and its occupants jumped on shore.

"Are the boys all right?" inquired St. Clair.

"The fellows are all O. K., and we didn't get the bear," answered Claude, "but one thing we did get, and that was a mighty good appetite, and, the sooner you give us some supper, Frank, the better we shall like it."

"You can have it at once; I've kept it warm. Come right off, and let Andrew and George look after the boat."

"That is talking business," said Foster. "I'm as hungry as a wolf."

While the late comers were eating supper, a large campfire was started, and around this all the party gathered. After the meal was over, the different actors in the afternoon's adventures had to tell their stories over again, and it was well-nigh midnight when the circle broke up and the camp became quiet.

About noon Thursday, the boys, who were all in camp, heard the noise of the team, and soon Gurney made his appearance with the boats. They were unloaded and carried down to the edge of the water, and then the party sat down to dinner, giving Gurney an invitation to eat with them.

"Did you have any fun yesterday, boys?" inquired their guest.

"Foster, Drake, and Wood had all they wanted,"

declared Le Roy; and then the bear story was told, much to the amusement of Mr. Gurney.

"Bears are gettin' pretty thick round these diggings," was Mr. Gurney's comment on the story.

"I suppose you have plenty of traps at the farm," said Claude.

"No, only two, but I mean to set 'em both soon as I can get time. Bears' pelts are worth about fifteen dollars each, and then you git a bounty for every one you kill, so it pays to trap 'em, if you don't have to spend too much time over it."

"I wish you were going with us, Mr. Gurney," said Wingate.

"Ye don't wish it any more'n I do. I'd like nothin' better than to go clear down river with ye; but I can't, so there's no use in talkin' of it. Shall ye be up this way another summer?"

"I don't think it likely," answered Claude. "This is the fourth trip we have made to the Maine woods, and I think another year we shall strike out in a different direction."

"Wal, I enjoyed yer company first rate, and ye treated me like white men, and, if ye ever do get this way agin, I hope we'll meet."

"I hope we shall," returned Claude. "We had a very nice time while stopping with you."

As soon as the party had finished dinner, everything was packed up and loaded into the boats, Mr. Gurney lending valuable aid; and at two o'clock the boats started down river, after each one of the party had given a handshake to their backwoods friend.

"Do you think we should find that bear in the vicinity where he treed us the other day, Claude?" asked Drake, when they had stopped shouting farewell to Gurney.

"My gracious, no! He may be fifty miles from there now."

"How far shall we get to-night, Claude?" inquired Foster.

"That's something of a conundrum. We ought to land by five o'clock, in order to arrange our camp for the night. My idea is to keep on till that hour, and after five stop at the first desirable camping spot. We ought to make seven or eight miles, if we meet with no detention."

They found very good water during the afternoon, and just after five turned a bend in the river, and on the north shore they noticed a very good place for camping, and the *Petrel* was run in there, and the other boats followed.

The ground was dry, and four or five feet above the river, with plenty of suitable firewood near. "Looking for a place to camp, Claude?" called Le Roy, as the *Swallow* swung in to the side of the river. "It is only ten minutes past five."

"I know that, Tommy. But there is a good deal to be done before dark. I don't think we will find a better place than this, and we had better camp here to-night."

"Come in here, Robbins," called Foster, to the coxswain of the *Daisy*; "we are going to stop here to-night."

"All right, I'm with you," and the *Daisy* was guided in, beside the other two boats.

Maynard and Le Roy cleared a place for their fire, and began getting supper, while the other members of the party unloaded the boats, cut a huge pile of wood, and improvised a shelter for the night. The evening was fine, and the night promised to be warm.

"Look here, Claude," said Robbins, when the party were gathered around the campfire after supper, "why can't you come to Florida, and see me next year, and we will go on a camping-out trip, down in the southern part of the State. I know you would enjoy it, and some of the other fellows could come with you. The more, the merrier."

"Perhaps we might," began Claude, but Foster interrupted:—

"Oh, hang Florida. It is made up of sand banks, fleas, alligators, and poor oranges. If you wish to see a country worth looking at, come out to the Pacific, and see California. You can make a trip out there that you will remember for a lifetime, and, if you bring out a party, I'll go camping out with them."

"That shows how much you know about Florida, Bill Foster," cried Robbins, indignantly. "It is the finest State in the Union."

"When all the others are out," interrupted Foster.

"Don't get to quarrelling over your adopted homes, you two bantams," said Claude. "Florida and California both possess attractions for New Englanders, and perhaps we can accept both invitations, and judge for ourselves which State we would like best. But

the summer would not be a very good time to visit either."

"Come in the winter, then," suggested Robbins.

"As I told Gurney," remarked Claude, "we have visited Maine four times, and I think next year we can try some other place. And, if I can get any of the boys to accompany me, I will come down and see you, Robbins, and we will try fishing and hunting a month or two in Florida. Then, the next year, we can go out and visit Foster, and see what he has to show us."

"I should like to make both trips, and will, if I can," said Wingate.

"Let's have it understood, then," proposed Maynard, "that, instead of coming to Maine in summer, we wait until winter, and visit Florida."

"I think we could have lots of fun shooting alligators," said Drake.

"You wouldn't kill one in ten years," laughed Le Roy.

Just then an owl, in a tree near them, broke out with his "Tu whit! tu whit! tu whoo!" so suddenly that they were all startled and sprang to their feet, but in a moment they realized that the owl had made a fool of them, and they had a good laugh at it.

As it was nearly ten o'clock, they did not renew the conversation, but scattered their fire, and turned in for the night, while the owl, startled by the noise they made, flew away to some distance, and did not cause them any further annoyance.

The next two days, the navigation was more difficult, they meeting with rapids quite often, some of which

were dangerous, but by constant care they passed them safely, and at four o'clock Saturday afternoon had reached the mouth of the Big Black River, where they concluded to stop until Monday.

They camped on the north side of the junction of the two streams, and, as it looked like rain, built a camp that would keep them dry, in the event of a storm.

As the cooks had no fish on hand when going into camp Saturday afternoon, Le Roy and Robbins took one of the boats, after the baggage and stores had been unloaded, and pulled up the river a few rods, to the foot of the rapids.

Anchoring the boat, they began casting, and the first trout fell to Le Roy. It weighed two pounds, and when Robbins netted it he found besides a smaller fish, that weighed about half a pound. He had never caught one like it before, and did not know what it was. It was a very handsome fish, and light-colored.

"I'd like to know if this fish is good to eat?" queried Robbins, as he took it from the net, and began to examine it.

"We can try it and see; we'll take it to camp, anyhow. Let me have it," and Le Roy took the fish, and, in turn, looked it over. "Did you notice anything funny about this fish, George," placing it to his nose as he spoke.

"No. What is it?"

"My, it smells like a cucumber."

"Get out with your nonsense."

"Smell of it and see," and Le Roy passed it back to his friend.

"I'll be hanged if it don't, Tommy. Do you suppose it tastes like a cucumber, after it is cooked?"

"Give it up."

"Perhaps Claude will know what it is. We can ask him when we get to camp. He is pretty well posted on the different varieties of fish."

For an hour they had very good luck, taking, in all, twenty-five trout, but they did not get any more of the "cucumber fish," as Robbins called them.

"You paddle down to camp, and let me troll, will you, Tommy?" asked Robbins. "I wish to troll, and see if I can't hook a big fish."

"If you do, you'll break your rigging. Your rod or line is not heavy enough for that kind of fishing."

"I'll take the risk, any way, if you will look after the boat."

"Of course, I will, if you are bound to try it; but if you break your rod, don't say I did not warn you."

"That's a bright remark, Tommy. I am not in the habit of laying my misfortunes to my friends," and George stood up and made a cast, and began reeling out his line until he had about one hundred feet out.

Le Roy had in the meantime pulled up the stone that had served them as an anchor, and unhitched it from their line, and, taking the oars instead of the paddle, rowed very slowly, as there was a smart current.

They drifted half the way toward camp, without Robbins getting a rise, and then he asked Le Roy to keep the boat stationary while he reeled in, and took off his extra flies, for he had been fishing with three at the rapids.

He now put on his drop fly, a piece of t^{ail} of a trout, and, casting again, allowed his line to run out as before, while Le Roy pulled slowly toward camp. Just opposite the landing, Tommy stopped rowing a few moments, calling the attention of Robbins to a musk-rat on the opposite shore, and, while they were watching the animal, Robbins' line sank under the water several feet.

"He's gone into his hole," said Le Roy, "let's go on shore and clean our fish before we take them to camp."

"All right. Wait a moment, and I'll reel up."

As he began to wind in his line he found that he had hooked something, but, whether a fish or a snag, he was in doubt, it pulled so hard.

"My gracious, Tommy! I've hooked either a whale or a snag; I can't tell which."

"Perhaps it's another centenarian turtle," suggested Tommy, laughing.

Suddenly the line slackened, and Robbins quickly reeled in fifty feet of it, but in a moment more his reel began to whirl rapidly the other way, and the fish or whatever was on the hook had taken a hundred feet more of the line before George dared to snub him.

"It's lucky I had a long line, or I should have lost it then."

"You have hooked a big fish, George, sure. Hang on, and see if you can't get near enough for me to net him. Reel up now, and I'll back the boat toward the fish, and see if I can't help you some," and Le Roy, during the rest of the battle, manœuvred the boat to aid his friend.

It was over half an hour, during which time both of the boys worked in unison, before Robbins had the fish near enough for Le Roy to attempt to net, and, when he finally had the net under the monster, he came near going overboard with it.

Just as Tommy passed the net under the trout, as they supposed it was, they heard an ominous snap, and the third joint of Robbins' rod broke short off. Had it happened a moment before, they would have lost the fish.

The captive flopped so lively after Le Roy had turned him into the boat, that he was obliged to give the fish two or three smart raps with the end of the net handle, for fear it would get into the river again.

"Great Cæsar's ghost!" exclaimed Robbins, "what a fish! I'll bet it will weigh twenty-five pounds. It isn't a trout either."

"Salmon, I guess, and it's a buster," and Tommy's eyes opened wide as he gazed at the monster, which was the largest fish that had ever been captured by any of the party.

"It's your turn to become head cook to-morrow, Tommy, and you must bake this fish for our Sunday's dinner. It will make enough for the whole party."

"I'll stuff it," replied Le Roy.

"Yes, I have no doubt you'll stuff part of it," answered Robbins, pretending not to understand.

"Oh, hold your mouth! It's got so now, in this crowd, that a fellow can't make a remark without some jackass trying to turn it into a pun. It's getting altogether too stale."

"Are you speaking of the fish, Tommy?"

"There you go again, you goose."

"I'm not that gender. Try again."

"Oh, shut up. I'm going in now. I want Claude to see these two strange fish. I am not sure now whether that big one is a salmon."

"There must be salmon in the St. John," declared Robbins. "There are in most all of the Canadian waters."

Le Roy now struck out with his oars, and in a few moments they were on shore. They hauled the boat out, and George went to the camp, a few rods away, and invited the rest of the party to come down and see the big fish before he cleaned it.

"You don't know what it is?" inquired Claude, as the whole party started for the riverside.

"No," answered the lucky fisherman. "It is shaped something like a salmon, but is marked more like a trout. Then we caught a small, light-colored fish, very pretty too, that smells for all the world like a cucumber."

"You should have christened that the vegetable fish," laughed Wingate.

When they reached the riverside, Le Roy had the fish all spread out in a line, beginning with the largest and ending with the smallest. They made a very handsome showing.

"Well, I declare, fellows, you had good luck," remarked Maynard, as he with the others admired the display.

"This small fish," said Claude, as he picked it up

and examined it, "is called by the French Canucks the whitefish, and I have read it will neither take bait nor the fly. How did you get it?"

"Caught it in the net, when I netted Tommy's first trout," replied Robbins.

"That was bull luck," added St. Clair.

"This large fish is called in Canada the toque," said Claude, "and they sometimes, but not very often, attain a weight of thirty-five pounds. I brought my large steelyards with me. They will weigh thirty pounds, but I guess that is enough for your fish."

"Are they fit to eat?" inquired Drake.

"Yes, but they are not as good as trout or salmon. Their flesh is coarser," and, picking up the toque, Claude weighed it and found it pulled down the needle to twenty-two pounds.

"You are the boss fisherman of the club," asserted Foster. "That is the largest fish that has ever been caught by any member. Is it not, Claude?"

"Yes. We ought to vote George a leather medal. How did you catch that toque? They do not rise to a fly, any more than the whitefish."

"I was trolling."

"That is the more sportsmanlike way of taking them, but lots of the natives spear them," said Claude.

The fish were all cleaned and carried to camp, and Maynard cooked the whitefish and some of the trout for supper.

Before retiring that night, the boys covered all their supplies carefully, for, at sundown, it looked more like rain than when they had landed, and they did not wish

to wake up in the morning and find part of their stores spoiled.

About midnight the rain began, and was accompanied by a violent wind, and the thermometer dropped twenty degrees, registering forty Sunday morning. This temperature, in a driving rain, made it seem even colder than it was, and the boys passed a most disagreeable day, having some difficulty to make fire enough to keep them warm. Le Roy gave up all idea of baking the big fish, waiting for a more favorable opportunity.

The rain did not cease falling entirely until nine o'clock in the evening, and then it grew colder. The boys drew lots to see which should tend the fires, they would be compelled to keep them up all night, each one keeping an hour's watch, and, as they could not all have the first watch, which was the most desirable, they took that method of settling it.

Before morning, the thermometer dropped to thirty, and Monday they saw ice for the first time on the trip. As the sun rose, however, the weather moderated fast, and they had a fine pleasant day, much warmer, the thermometer registering sixty-eight at noon.

"If we are going to have ice the 5th of September," declared Wood, while they were eating breakfast, "we shall need a sleigh to go down the lower part of this river, instead of boats."

Claude laughed. "Oh, we shall have a cold night or day once in a while," he said, "but, on the whole, we shall get very good weather up this way until about the 1st of November. Sometimes October is the most pleasant month in the season

"Is that so?" queried Wood, doubtfully.

"Yes. When we have a violent line-storm, October is most always a nice month," replied Claude.

"We generally get the line-storm from the 10th to the 20th of September," added St. Clair; "so, after that comes, you can tell what kind of weather we are going to have during the rest of the season, Dave."

"I will remember that," replied Wood.

As their rubber blankets were wet through, and their woollen blankets somewhat damp, they concluded to stay where they were during the day, and get all of their things thoroughly dried, and do a little washing and mending, and start the next morning.

Le Roy stuffed and baked the toque for dinner, and the boys all tried it, but not one of them liked it as well as trout.

Monday night was comparatively warm again, and they slept without a fire, and had a good night's rest, nothing happening to disturb their slumbers.

(AFTER XV.

A PARTRIDGE HUNT.

"COME, Dave, turn out," cried Le Roy, about five o'clock Tuesday morning. "We must be getting breakfast."

"What is the use of getting up so early?" expostulated Wood, drowsily, half inclined to turn over and take another nap.

"Because the fellows intend to get away by seven o'clock. Turn out, now; if you don't, I'll see if a dipper of water will open your eyes. You must cut some wood, while I make the fire; there is not wood enough for breakfast, unless we burn you," and Le Roy laughed at his friend.

"Clear out, you barbarian, and I'll get up," and Dave, making a virtue of necessity, turned out and dressed, and, taking an axe, began preparing fuel.

"How far shall we go to-day, fellows?" queried Claude, as the three boats were pushed off from the landing and headed down river once more.

"As far as we can, I say," replied Le Roy. "Let's make the distance from here to that farm at the mouth of the Chimmenticook in two days, if possible; for we can get a lamb and, probably, milk, butter, and eggs there, and we are out of all those things except butter, and we have enough of that to last two days. I am

sure it will be gone in that time, and I don't like to cook without butter."

"Then we'll row until eleven, and go on shore for dinner. Start again at one and row until five," proposed Claude. "Is that satisfactory?"

"Yes," cried all the party, and the rowers struck out.

It was another beautiful day, as pleasant and even warmer than Monday, and the whole party enjoyed the sail; nothing occurred to interrupt their progress, until about half-past nine, when, rounding a little bend of the river, they discovered seven animals, wading across the river, in a shallow spot.

The three coxswains caught sight of the game at the same moment, and, in their excitement, shouted, "Caribou!"

The fleet-footed rangers of the forest heard the noise, saw the boats, and scented their occupants, and the next moment they were hurrying toward the western shore; and the head one disappeared in the woods as the boys opened fire on them.

"Confound the luck! They have every one got away!" cried Drake, as the last animal bounded up the bank just as Charlie and Claude fired for the last time.

"I don't care if they have," returned Claude. "It's the close season. We have no right to shoot them until October, and I should not have fired at all if we had not been out of meat."

"Let's go on shore, Claude," called Wingate from the *Swallow*, "and see if some of them were not hit.

I don't believe all those shots could have been wasted."

"I am willing, if the others are."

"Yes, yes," cried the boys, excitedly.

The boats were now run in to where the animals left the river, and secured in such a manner that they would not go adrift, and then the fellows left them and clambered up the bank, some four feet in height.

Wingate was first to reach the top of the bank, and, looking carefully around, cried eagerly, "Look there! look there, fellows! Don't you see the blood; one of them has been hit, sure, and I say let's follow him."

"We may have to chase them ten miles, and then bring back nothing for our pains, unless the animal is mortally wounded," replied Claude, doubtfully.

"That is true," acknowledged Charlie. "But, look here, and here," stepping along and pointing to blood-stains as he spoke; "that animal can't travel many miles losing blood at that rate, it must be mortally wounded. I'll bet ten dollars we find one of those caribou dead within two miles of the river."

"If we are going out on the trail," remarked Claude, after a little thought, "Le Roy and Wood had better remain here and make preparations for dinner, so we can have it on our return. It is nearly ten o'clock now, and we can't tell how long we shall be away, but it is certainly safe to say two or three hours. You and I can take our hunting-knives, and we had better carry an axe, and then if we find the animal we can skin it and cut it up in such pieces that the seven of us can get back with it easily."

"I like your proposition," said Le Roy, "and Dave and I will have everything ready by the time you get back, and, if you bring the caribou, I can cook some of the steaks in fifteen minutes."

The boys now returned to the boats, and Foster obtained an axe, which he offered to carry. Charlie and Claude took their hunting-knives, and the other four who were to make up the party their fire-arms. They lost no time in getting away, and found the trail broad and easy for the first mile. After that it was apparent to the boys that the wounded animal was dragging behind the others, and sometimes shambled along entirely outside of the other tracks.

About two miles from the river they reached a small brook, and found that the animal had drank from and then crossed it, and some fifty yards from the brook, by a huge windfall, they found a male caribou dead, stretched out on his side.

"Hurrah!" cried Charlie, "what did I tell you? Now we can have some meat for dinner."

"And I, for one, shall be glad to get it," added Drake.

"That's a big one, fellows," said Claude. "I should think he would weigh six hundred. But we must get to work." And, whipping out his hunting-knife, and assisted by Charlie, the two boys soon had the animal skinned, and then proceeded to cut him up. As soon as this was done, they divided the meat, and started back, returning over nearly the same ground.

"I should like to know which one of us killed this fellow," said Maynard, as they walked slowly along,

for, loaded as they were, no one seemed inclined to hurry.

"I can answer that question," remarked Claude, with a laugh. "Not one of us killed him, but everybody had a hand in it, I guess, for he was completely riddled with bullets and buckshot. I don't wonder that he bled freely, but what I do wonder at is how in the dickens he could carry so much lead such a distance."

"I suppose none of the bullets hit him in a very dangerous place, and he probably bled to death," suggested Drake.

"That is not a bad idea of yours, Rob," replied Charlie. "What do you think, Claude?"

"Oh, it might be so."

"It's hot enough to-day to make up for Sunday night," declared Foster, as he stopped for a moment to wipe the moisture from his face.

"Travelling with a load brings the sweat out of you," said Drake. "I am glad that caribou was considerate enough to die where he did, for this is as far as I care to lug any part of his carcass."

"But you like to have meat in camp," insinuated Robbins.

"Certainly. But that is no reason why I should care to lug it ten miles."

"Poke along, and save your wind, Drake. The caribou was not over two miles from the river when we found him, and we are certainly half-way back," spoke up Charlie.

It was half past twelve when the hunting party strag-

gled up to the cook's fire and deposited their burdens a short distance away. Le Roy cut some slices of steak, and, with Dave's assistance, broiled them at once, and in twenty minutes announced to his tired and hungry friends that dinner was ready.

They gladly obeyed the summons, and the two cooks ate with the party. After dinner, Charlie and Claude took care of the meat they were to take with them, while Le Roy and Wood washed and packed up the dishes, and, although all the members of the party helped when they could, it was two o'clock before the boats were afloat again.

They passed several small streams during the afternoon, and about five o'clock reached one that emptied into the river on the west side. They went on shore just below its mouth, and, finding the spot favorable for camping purposes, passed the night there without incident or adventure worth relating.

Wednesday morning they found they were in the fog, but it lifted before they had made three miles on the river; they ran until noon, and then stopped a couple of hours, as they figured that they were within six miles of their destination for the night.

Starting at two o'clock, they rowed easily along, and at five o'clock they came to the mouth of the Chimmencook River, and, passing a few rods below it, landed on the north shore, but a short distance from the farm. They built their camp as usual, not caring to stop at the farmhouse, for various reasons.

Thursday morning they went to the farm and found the proprietor, whom they interviewed on the subject of

stores. They found both the male and female partners of the establishment ready to sell anything they had for money, and Wingate purchased six dozens of eggs, ten pounds of butter, and five quarts of milk, also a lamb that dressed off fifty pounds, the six meals they had eaten from it having made quite a hole in their caribou meat.

The farmer told them there was another log house and clearing at the mouth of the Tulandic stream, the next river below, a distance of about ten miles. As they did not get ready to leave the Frenchman's until eleven o'clock, they concluded to have dinner where they were.

At one o'clock they were under way again, speeding easily along with a good current. Swinging around one of the sharp curves that they were constantly meeting with, Foster noticed a fox trotting along the right-hand bank of the river.

The boys all stopped rowing and paddling, and reached for guns and rifles. The fox scented them, and, turning, took a look at the boats, and, not liking their appearance, bounded over the bushes that lined the bank, and disappeared before a single shot was fired. A chorus of groans was wafted after knowing Reynard, who had no idea of making a target of himself.

"What a mean fox!" exclaimed Foster, as the animal was lost to view. "Wouldn't even give a fellow a chance for a shot."

"That's where his head was level," replied Claude; "he didn't care to lunch on cold lead."

At half past four the boys passed the mouth of Tulandic Stream, and, a few moments later, landed on the north shore, near the clearing.

After supper they went up to the log house, and purchased all the eggs, butter, and milk they could buy, and, also, two bushels of new potatoes, which were the first they had eaten for a long while.

They learned from the man who lived on the farm that it would take them about two days to go to the mouth of Little Black River, where there were two more farms, and where they could purchase more supplies.

Saturday morning they started at eight o'clock, and at half past twelve stopped for dinner at the mouth of a large stream, that entered into the St. John from the west.

As it was Le Roy's last dinner, he took plenty of time to prepare it, and treated them to roast caribou and mashed potato, hot johnny-cake, and plum pudding with cold sauce. Having a greater variety to do with, they could now get up much better meals; the butter, eggs, and milk being great additions to the commissary department. The cooking and eating of this dinner, however, took up more time than usual, and it was three o'clock before the party was again afloat.

During the afternoon they passed the mouth of several small streams, and, about half past five, reached quite a large island in the middle of the river, and landed just below the end of it, at the mouth of a small brook on the north side of the St. John.

It was very cold that night, and ice formed again, and when they awoke Sunday morning the fog was so thick it seemed like a solid mass, and they could not see twenty yards away. Nobody seemed inclined to get up, and it was nine o'clock before Wood turned out. He was chief cook for the week, and had Wingate for assistant.

But Charlie did not propose to do his work for him, and, as Wood was comparatively green, his only experience having been the week before as Le Roy's assistant, it was eleven o'clock before they sat down to breakfast, and then not a very good one.

Drake proposed they should stop where they were for the day, but, after an argument over the matter, they concluded to make a start, and go as far as they could easily, not knowing but they would have it foggy the next morning.

It was half past twelve before they broke camp, and were again afloat. In an hour they had passed two more small streams, and found by their compasses that the river was making a big bend to the south.

About four o'clock they passed a small island, going to the left of it, and, a mile beyond, noticed that the river was swinging to the north again.

At five o'clock they stopped on a little point, that made into the river from the west, and camped for the night. The weather had been warm during the day, but it grew cold again at dark; the temperature, however, was not so low as the night before, as no ice formed, but there was a little vapor the next morning, and it was nine o'clock before they left the camp ground.

At noon they stopped on the north bank of the river, at the mouth of a small brook, and Wood, who had been twitted considerably about his cooking, gave them the best meal he had yet prepared.

"Don't get discouraged, Dave," advised Claude, pleasantly, while they were eating. "Cooking does not come naturally to everybody; most people have to learn it."

"I am afraid I shall never learn."

"Yes, you will, if you are determined to. This meal is a great improvement over your others; just keep on trying, and, by the time you go home, you will be able to cook in a way that will surprise your mother."

"I should like to hear from home; I don't know whether my folks are alive or dead," remarked Dave, his lip trembling, and unshed tears in his eyes.

"We are all in the same box," declared Claude, whose nature was strongly sympathetic, catching one of Dave's hands, and pressing it. "No news is good news, my boy, and when we get to Fort Kent, I expect we shall find several bushels of mail."

"The meat is all gone, fellows," announced Dave.

"Don't let that trouble you," observed Charlie; "we will buy another lamb when we get to one of those farms we expect to reach to-night."

At half past one the party embarked again, and, during the afternoon, ran the Little Black River Rapids, without accident, although they experienced some difficulty in one or two places, and it was nearly six o'clock when they reached the first farm, and landed on the north bank of the river.

It was so late that every member of the club had to work with a will to enable them to get their camp arranged and prepare supper before dark.

Tuesday morning, after breakfast, they went up to the house, and found the owner, and bought all the supplies he had to sell. During the forenoon, they loaded their boats, and dropped a short distance down the river, below the mouth of the Little Black, and went into camp on the north side of the St. John.

After dinner they walked up to the second log house, and interviewed the proprietor to see what he had to sell, and picked up eggs, butter, milk, and a small home-made cheese. They also learned from a young man, who spoke broken English (broken all up, Drake wittily put it), and who worked on the place, that partridges were quite thick in the neighborhood of the two clearings. They also learned, from the owner, that they could not obtain any more supplies until they reached Savage's, at the mouth of the St. Francis.

"I thought there must be savages in this wilderness somewhere," said Drake, laughing.

The Frenchman was somewhat dull of comprehension, beside not understanding English very well, and did not see the point, and a puzzled expression appeared on his face after Drake's remark.

St. Clair noticed it, and explained, "Don't mind what that fellow says; he is a little wrong here," tapping his forehead.

"Ah, I comprehendvous," returned the Frenchman.

"Let up, you skunk!" replied Drake.

"There you see, sir," added St. Clair, "he is asking you for a skunk."

"Come along, fellows," called Claude, as he started for the river, "and stop your guying."

After reaching camp, Claude asked his friends how they would like to remain where they were until Thursday morning, and devote Wednesday to a grand partridge hunt.

This proposition was received with great favor by all, and was carried into effect.

Wednesday morning, after breakfast, every member of the party started out, taking a lunch with him. Claude, Charlie, Foster, and Drake took the *Petrel* and went up the river to the other clearing, and the other five went back into the one on which they were stopping, all agreeing to meet at the camp by five o'clock, and, to encourage each to do his best, it was also agreed that the fellow bringing in the smallest number of birds should pay for a supper at Young's Hotel for the whole party, after they reached Boston.

After Claude and his party landed, and took the *Petrel* out of the water, they separated, having first agreed to rendezvous at the boat at half past four.

At five o'clock, the party that had hunted on the lower clearing began to arrive at camp, and by ten minutes past the hour were all there. Five minutes later, the others appeared from the river, and the score was taken. Fifty-nine partridges had been shot during the day, and Maynard remarked that he guessed they would be rather scarce in that vicinity the rest of the fall. They were divided among the party as follows:

Claude had brought in five; Foster, seven; St. Clair, nine; Robbins, six; Maynard, eight; Le Roy, three; Wood, five; Wingate, ten; and Drake, six.

When the count was announced, the party cheered Wingate, as the champion, and badgered Tommy unmercifully at his poor success. But Le Roy stood it like a martyr, and declared that one could not shoot the birds if he did not see them to shoot, a fact that was self-evident.

As they had such a large number, half a dozen were picked and cleaned, and fricasseed for supper, and the young hunters enjoyed the fruits of their day's sport.

Having obtained a lamb from Mr. Picot, they had plenty of provisions to last for two or three days, and on Thursday morning the boats were launched, and at seven o'clock the boys pushed out into the stream, and headed down river once more.

The party stopped from twelve to two on the south side of the river for dinner, and at five o'clock went into camp at the head of Nigger Brook Rapids, having passed the mouth of the Allaguash. The Frenchman, Picot, had warned them that these rapids were rather dangerous, and the boys concluded they would look them over the next morning from the river bank, before they attempted their passage.

After breakfast Friday morning, Claude, Wingate, and St. Clair worked their way along the bank of the river some distance, and examined the water carefully, and, after some argument, finally concluded that it would be safer to carry everything around but the boats, and these they could drop down from the shore.

This programme was accordingly carried out, and used up the whole forenoon, and the party took their dinner at the foot of the "colored gentleman's rapids," as Robbins laughingly put it.

When they reached the foot of Cross Rock Rapids, it began to sprinkle, and they immediately went into camp, and had hardly time to get ready for the rain when it came down in torrents. At sundown, however, it held up, and cleared away.

The next morning the sun rose clear and bright, but between seven and eight it went into a cloud, and the temperature began to change.

"We shall get the line-storm, in my opinion, before the weather clears again, and we must reach Savage's to-night. If he will put us up, even if we have to sleep in his barn, we had better do it than be outdoors in a cold storm for several days or a week," and Claude looked at the others for an expression of opinion.

"My sentiments, exactly," said Wingate.

"Mine, too," chimed in St. Clair, and indeed the boys seemed to entertain a very unanimous opinion on the subject.

"Then let's start, and not stop until we reach Savage's landing," proposed Claude. "We can get along if we don't have but two meals to-day."

"Right you are," remarked Wood.

"Dave is sure to agree with you on that," added Drake, laughing.

At half past eight Saturday morning, the little flotilla made a fresh start. They passed several different rapids without accident, and reached the mouth

of the St. Francis River at three o'clock. They passed to the right of the islands, and stopped opposite the lower one, a short distance from the mouth of a small stream, that flowed into the river from Maine, and which stream, they had been told, was near Savage's.

The boats were unloaded, and taken out of the water, turned bottom up, and covered over with canvas, and, while Wood and Wingate began preparations for the dinner and supper combined, Claude and St. Clair started up to Savage's house, to see if they could secure accommodations for the party for a few days. The rest of the boys busied themselves, meanwhile, in bringing everything from the boats to the place where the cooks had started their fire.

Claude and Andrew soon found Mr. Savage's habitation, a small white house, standing near a road which they afterward learned followed the river down to Fort Kent, and were also lucky enough to find Mr. Savage himself, which was more to the purpose.

Claude stated their wants to him, and Mr. Savage admitted the weather looked bad, and finally said he would take care of them if they would put up with such sleeping accommodations as he had to offer.

The two friends assured him that they could sleep anywhere that other people could, and that, if he was any way short of bedding, they could furnish their own blankets. Claude told him they were getting their supper then, and would be up after they had eaten it, and bring whatever was likely to get wet.

"Will he let us stop with him?" queried Charlie.

as soon as he caught sight of the returning messengers.

"Yes," replied Claude, "and he appears to be a nice fellow."

"Savage by name, but not by nature," suggested Le Roy.

"We had better take everything to the house with us, except the boats and cooking utensils," remarked Claude, "and what we leave here we can stow under the boats."

"Think they'll be safe?" asked Wood.

"Mr. Savage seemed to think they would. I asked him about it."

By six o'clock, everything was packed up, and, scattering their fire, the boys adjourned in a body to the Hotel Savage. They had not been indoors an hour when it began to rain, and the storm increased with each hour, the wind blowing very hard.

For three days they were detained here, and during Monday an inch of snow fell. The storm broke late Tuesday afternoon, and when the boys went outdoors Wednesday morning they found it pleasant, and quite warm.

Claude saw Mr. Savage, and told him they should leave after breakfast, and tried to obtain some stores to take with them. But the landlord laughed, and said he had kept them so long, not knowing they were coming, that he could not spare a thing, but that he thought they would be able to obtain what they wanted from a Mr. Connor, three miles below, on the opposite side of the river.

After breakfast, Wingate paid the bill, and the boys, taking their belongings, went to the river, where they found the boats, and the other articles they had left, safe, and they were soon afloat, and on their way toward Connor's.

The rapids at Toban Bar, a mile below Savage's, were run without difficulty, and at nine o'clock the boys reached the grounds belonging to Connor, and a landing was made.

Wingate and Claude went up to the lumberman's house, a much larger building than Savage's, and inquired for Mr. Connor, but he was not at home. From the women in the house, however, they procured two dozen eggs, some milk, and butter, which would do them until they reached Fort Kent, where there were stores, and where they would stop that night.

The boats had not been taken out of the water, and the moment Claude and Charlie returned they pushed forward again. During the forenoon, they passed eight or ten islands, and stopped about one o'clock, at the head of Winding Ledges, to get their dinner.

"Great Scott! There's a church," sang out Drake, pointing across the river, they having landed on the Maine side. "That's quite a sight."

"Oh, we are beginning to get into an inhabited country once more," remarked Foster. "Just think of it, there are stores at Fort Kent. Won't we go on a bust!"

"We'll bust the postoffice, the first thing," added Wood, "and get our mail; and I'll bet the postmaster will be glad to get rid of it."

They had hard work to find enough wood in this vicinity to cook their dinner with, but they accomplished it after a while, and as soon as the meal was over they started again, reaching Fort Kent at four o'clock. They had a narrow escape from an accident while running the Winding Ledges Rapids, but they came out all right, and a miss is as good as a mile.

They had landed at the lower end of the town, near the old block house, which they wished to see. It stood at the junction of the two rivers, the Fish River, which drains the Eagle Lakes, emptying into the St. John at this point. The old fort was close to the water, and the boys inspected it in a body. When they had satisfied their curiosity in regard to this historic ruin, Claude and Wingate were despatched to buy stores, and St. Clair and Robbins to the postoffice for the mail. The other members of the party crossed Fish River in the boats, and established the camp there.

"It will not be necessary to get many things, Charlie," said Claude, as they tramped toward the business part of the town, "because we can get more at Edmundston."

"Milk, butter, eggs, and a ham are all we need for to-day," replied Wingate, looking at his list.

As they walked along, the natives noticed they were strangers, and many curious glances were thrown after them. But the boys had become accustomed to being stared at, and did not mind it any. They found a store of the general variety kind, where they bought all they wanted but the milk, and the proprietor, who was very pleasant, sent them to a house in the neighbor-

hood, where they procured it. Then they returned to the river, and were ferried across to camp, where they found St. Clair and Robbins, who had arrived before them, and had brought one hundred and five letters and two hundred and fifteen other pieces of mail matter, consisting of papers, books, and packages.

"I tell you, we had a load," remarked St. Clair, "and the postmaster was glad to get rid of it. You should have seen some countrymen in the store stare when the mail was passed to us. I guess they thought we were members of Congress up here on a time."

"The postmaster asked me where we were from," added Robbins, "and I told him how we had come from Boston, and let him know we had made the trip all through Maine without any guides, and he looked as if he did not believe it."

That evening was devoted to reading letters and looking over papers, and the party came to the conclusion that they would try and reach Edmundston the next day, and stop at a hotel that night, where they would have a better chance to answer their letters than in camp.

Thursday morning the fellows were early astir, and breakfast was served at six o'clock. At seven the party embarked and passed the Rapids of Clare's Bar and the Fish River Rapids without difficulty.

While running the first rapids Robbins dryly remarked that it would take a long time for a fellow to get drunk on the liquor that came from Clare's Bar.

Six miles below Fort Kent they passed the mouth of Baker River, flowing into the St. John from the north,

the outlet of a number of lakes. There were several islands scattered along the river in this locality, one of which was quite large. About noon they passed a little Roman Catholic settlement called Chatacoin, and half-way between there and Frenchville they stopped for dinner.

During the afternoon they passed Michaud's Island and Rapids, and reached Edmundston about five o'clock. They found this to be a large place, the terminus of the New Brunswick Railway, and they made up their minds to stop here a few days.

Charlie and Claude were appointed a committee of inquiry, and, while the rest of the party remained by the boats, they went off to look up a hotel. They were gone an hour, and on their return they were besieged with questions.

"We have engaged rooms at Whitney's Hotel, and everything will have to be moved up there. The landlord promised to send a team down right away for our baggage and camp equipage, and the boats we had better carry along ourselves when the team goes."

"How far shall we have to carry them?" inquired Drake.

"Only a short distance. Two of us can carry one from here to the house easily enough," answered Wingate.

In about fifteen minutes the team made its appearance, and the fellows helped the driver load all their things, and Drake, Wood, and Foster went along with the vehicle, to look after the baggage when it reached the hotel, while the other six members of the party car-

ried the boats. Before the boys reached the house with the boats, they had quite a following from the younger citizens of Edmundston, who were very anxious to learn their business and all about them, showing quite as much inquisitiveness as their neighbors across the river, in Yankee land.

The boys all enjoyed a good bath before supper, and all passed through the barber's hands, coming out "looking a little less like savages," as Maynard put it. That evening was devoted to writing letters by the whole party, as the mail left the next day.

Friday morning, while eating breakfast, the boys came to the conclusion to lie over where they were until Monday, for a change. Claude remarked that they had stop-over tickets on that trip, and could stop as often as it suited them.

During the forenoon, they visited the ruins of an old block house on the lower or eastern side of the Madawaska, and from Block House Hill obtained a fine view of the town. After dinner they fell into conversation with the landlord, and he told them of a great country for hunting, through which, with a good guide, they could easily make the trip in a week, and he promised to send for a guide, an Indian, called Tom Tadpole, and have him at the house that evening, to give the boys any information they might wish for in regard to the excursion.

The afternoon they passed in walking around the village, and about sundown ascended a high ledge located but a short distance from their hotel, and from the summit of which they obtained a very fine view.

The St. John could be traced for ten miles, flowing through a rich and picturesque valley, and nine miles distant the dark front of Mount Carmel made a marked contrast with the sapphire blue of the sky. They all united in pronouncing the scenery fine, and returned to the house well satisfied with the manner in which the day had been spent.

In the evening, Mr. Tadpole, the Indian, — “the last of the Milicetes,” Drake called him, — put in an appearance, and was introduced to the boys by Mr. Whitney. Claude asked him if he could take them where they could shoot a moose, and Tadpole promised they should shoot one, two, three moose if they would hire him, and put themselves under his guidance.

“One, two, three, that is six moose,” said Foster, with a wink at his friends.

“How is that?” queried the Indian, looking puzzled.

“Why, one and two are three, and three are six,” replied Foster; “don’t you see?”

But Tadpole looked as if he did not see it at all, and was inwardly wondering what the young man was giving him.

After talking over the trip for two hours, the Indian was finally engaged, and ordered to be on hand the next morning and take the boats and a canoe he was to furnish up the river as far as Griffin’s, to which place the boys would go by team on Monday, bringing all the provisions necessary for the trip, and whatever else they needed.

Sunday turned out a duller day than the party antici-

pated, from the fact that it rained from early morn till late at night, and, if the boys were kept indoors, they had this to console them, that they were in comfortable quarters.

Monday morning they were up in good season, had breakfast at half past six, and an hour later were on the road, in two teams furnished by the landlord. As they were to return to the hotel, before continuing their trip down the St. John, they left whatever they thought they could do without for a week at the house, and the proprietor guaranteed everything would be safe during their absence.

CHAPTER XVI.

A SIDE TRIP.

It was a beautiful morning for any kind of an outdoor excursion, and the party enjoyed the pleasant drive to Griffin's very much. Tadpole met them not with the usual grave expression seen on an Indian's face, but with his countenance illumined with a smile of welcome, and the remark, "Me have team ready to haul things to Mud Lake," which the boys had already learned was two and a half miles from where the teams left them.

It took some engineering about the packing to get the boats, the canoe, and all the *impedimenta* across at one load; but, as Claude said, "when you are determined to do a thing, you generally find some way to accomplish it," and at one o'clock the party launched the boats and canoe in Mud Pond, and then, after partaking of a cold lunch, loaded up and started.

Tadpole took all his canoe would hold, and the boys distributed what there was left equally among the three boats' crews, and left the landing, Tadpole ahead in his birch, acting as pilot.

At five o'clock they went into camp on Fourth Squatook Lake, and Tadpole was directed to help cut the necessary fuel and bring water, the boys preferring to do the cooking themselves. Drake and Claude, who

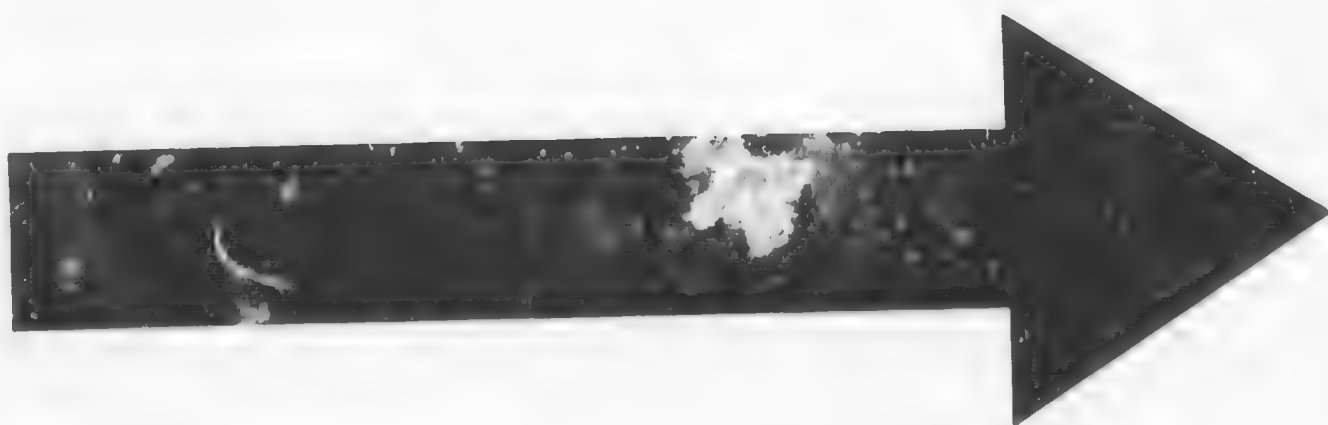
were the cooks for the week, turned their attention at once to preparations for supper, and let their friends see to building a camp.

Although the boys were quite at home in woodland architecture, especially St. Clair, Wingate, and Maynard, who had made a thorough study of camp-building, they found the Indian could give them points on that business, and, watching Tadpole closely and questioning him freely, they gained some valuable information in this particular kind of woodcraft. The Indian, unlike most of his race I have met, seemed not only willing to work, but anxious to keep busy, and proved a valuable assistant.

If the boys were pleased with the Indian, he certainly was with them. They treated him exactly as an equal, and after supper, in which he showed himself a good feeder, he complimented them on their cooking, in terms odd but expressive.

After supper, the boys built up a rousing campfire, and gathered around its cheerful blaze and genial warmth, and, after some coaxing, induced Tadpole to give them several unwritten chapters from his experience of forest life and adventure. Once started on what was, apparently, to him an agreeable task, he grew eloquent, and his description of scenes and incidents by lake and forest held his hearers spellbound until nearly midnight.

When Claude said that it was half past eleven, and time for them to turn in, if they intended to get up at all the next morning, his friends could hardly believe it, but the fact could not be disputed; and, thanking



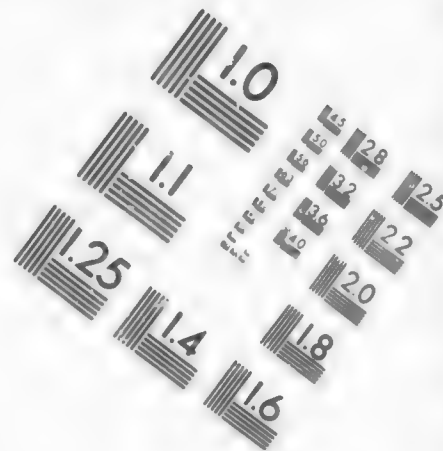
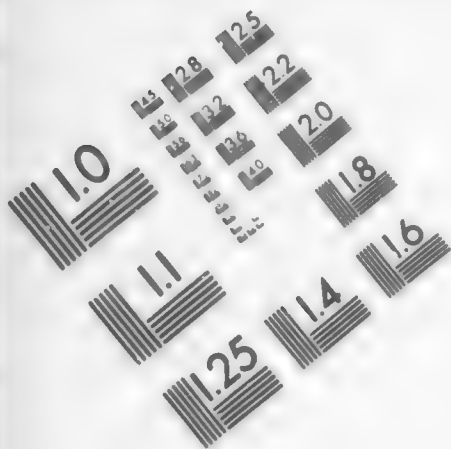
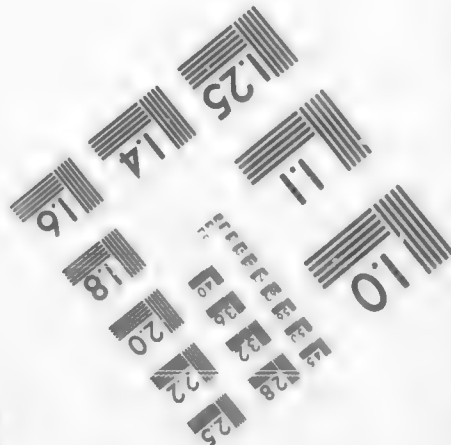
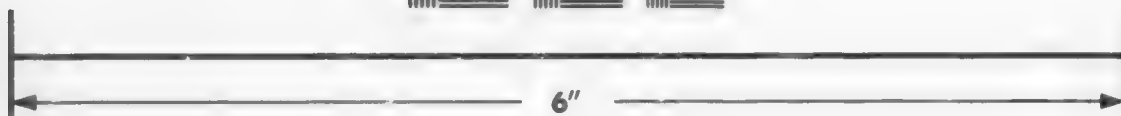
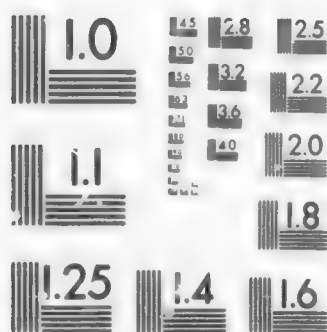


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Tadpole for his charming evening's entertainment, the whole party retired, and were soon deep in the healthy slumber incident to forest life.

Tuesday morning, at four o'clock, Tadpole called Claude and Wingate, according to a little arrangement made the night before, and the two friends, taking their double-barrelled guns, and a dozen rounds of ammunition each, accompanied the Indian, who paddled them silently away from the camp, and then around to some coves in the little lake, where ducks were apt to lie over night.

The party came first on a flock of black ducks, that were just about to start out for breakfast, and, blazing away at them, the two boys knocked over five birds dead, and two wounded, which they secured after picking up the dead ones.

The Indian paddled about a quarter of a mile beyond to another cove, and this was literally full of ducks, and the boys killed fifteen at their first fire, emptied their second barrels and tumbled over five more, loaded and fired both barrels again, getting thirteen birds from the second double shot.

"By Jove, Claude! isn't this sport!" cried Charlie, as they picked up the birds floating on the water all around them.

"Immense!" declared Claude, with sparkling eyes. "Can't we get another shot at that flock, Tadpole?"

"Not now. No pay chase more. Come round this way again mebbe. Go to next cove now. Be ready to shoot, most always big lot ducks, go quack! quack! here."

There were about one hundred ducks in the next cove, and the two young Nimrods killed twenty out of this lot, and, as it was now time for Claude to return and get breakfast, the Indian turned the canoe toward camp.

The firing they had done, however, had started the ducks in every direction, and they had two more good shots on their way back, killing nine at the first double fire and eleven at the second.

It was half past six when they reached camp, and everybody was up, having been awakened by the firing. Their friends were surprised when they saw the load of ducks the hunters had with them, and every fellow in the party wished he had gone out duck-shooting. Drake already had the fire built, and had begun preparations for breakfast on finding that his assistant had stolen out early.

The boys had a chance to sample the ducks at breakfast, and pronounced them very nice. Robbins jokingly remarked that he was so well pleased with the sample that Drake and Claude might ship him a load of the goods at once, and sent his plate for it.

When the morning meal was over and everything cleared up, the party broke camp and paddled to Third Lake, reaching a suitable camping spot at eleven o'clock. The cooks proceeded to get dinner at once, as the party intended to climb Squa-took Peak, a slightly, conical hill, which rose boldly up from the shore of the lake, near the site they had selected for their camp.

While dinner was progressing, the rest of the party,

including Tadpole, were engaged in building a camp, as the club would spend the night where they were.

Starting after dinner, guided by the Indian, who knew every inch of ground in the vicinity, the boys reached the top of the mountain at three o'clock, and found a magnificent view spread out before them, three hundred square miles being within the field of vision. From the peak on which they stood the forest stretched away from them for two hundred miles to the east, southeast, and northeast, without a break.

It was warm and pleasant on the summit, and the party sat there for over two hours enjoying the view, while the Indian pointed out different localities and told more of his adventures in the Canadian wilderness.

It was a little after five when they started down, and about half-way to camp they came to the trail of a bear, which led around from the other side of the mountain, crossing their trail, and bearing toward the foot of Squa-took River, which the Indian said Bruin would cross.

The younger members in the crowd were eager to follow the trail of the bear, as they were all armed, the Indian having told them at dinner time that bears were very plenty in that vicinity, and that all the party had better carry fire-arms.

Claude objected to following the trail of the bear, because daylight was nearly gone; as they were camped on the east shore of the lake, the trail leading westerly, they would have a long way to walk when they were ready to return.

His friends urged, however, that Tadpole would not get lost, even if darkness overtook them, and were so anxious to go that Claude withdrew his objections. Then it occurred to him that it would be a good idea to have the boats over on the west side of the inlet, for the party to come back in; it would save them a long tramp, and he offered, if Charlie would help him, to go and take them down there.

"Certainly I will help you," said Wingate, "so move ahead, fellows, and kill your 'b'ar,' and Claude and I will strike for camp and follow you with the boats."

This was agreeable to all, and, the question being decided, the Indian went ahead on the trail of the bear, and Claude and Wingate started for camp.

Tadpole had been right in his idea as to the way Bruin was travelling, and the party followed as nearly a straight line as the shore of the lake would permit, to the foot of Squa-took River, and were so close on their enemy that they saw him enter the woods on the other side.

"Cross river quick, now, boys, make little noise spread out, and I hurry on, and head him off. Be all ready; when you see him, fire!"

"But we might hit you," suggested Maynard.

"Me hit—no danger. I look out. Keep eyes open, step softly, and shoot soon's you see him."

A second later and the Indian had disappeared so silently that he was gone from among them before one of the party was aware of it, and they looked at each other in surprise.

"Come, fellows, don't stand like posts!" exclaimed

Maynard, who was the first to recover himself. "We must wade the river at once, and I'll bet the water is none too warm. But here goes," and Frank stepped in.

On the opposite side of the river the party spread out as the Indian had directed, and in about fifteen minutes a slight noise was heard in advance, and a moment later the bear appeared, now scarcely discernible in the fast falling shades of night.

St. Clair, Maynard, and Robbins, who were on the south end of the line, saw Bruin first, and opened fire on the animal, who turned northward and shuffled rapidly toward the lake, and this gave Foster and Le Roy a shot, and later Drake and Wood, the latter raising a shout of triumph as he saw the bear fall.

"Hurrah, fellows, he's down!" said Wood; "let's finish him before he gets up"

At this the party rushed up to the bear, reaching the animal just as he had regained his feet, and they all poured in a volley, which, at such short range, had the desired effect, and Bruin was quickly released from earthly troubles.

As they gave the bear his quietus, the Indian suddenly stood in their midst, and said, "Good! you kill him quick."

The bear had been shot about a dozen rods from the lake shore, and the boys carried him to the water's edge, where they found Claude and Charlie, just arrived in the *Petrel* and *Swallow*, with the *Daisy* and the Indian's canoe in tow.

As Tadpole wanted the bear's hide, the animal was bundled into his canoe, and then the party embarked

for camp, which they could steer directly for, as Claude and Charlie had taken the precaution to build up a good fire at the edge of the water before leaving, and the light from this was plainly visible.

Drake and Claude began preparations for supper, while Tadpole, assisted by the others, hung up the bear in a convenient position for the Indian to skin, who accomplished that job with a dexterity that excited his young friends' admiration.

After the skin had been removed, the Indian cut the animal open, took out the entrails, and then cut him into quarters, each of which he hung to the limb of a convenient tree.

"You can take the prize, Tadpole, on butchering bears," said Foster, who had been an attentive spectator and willing helper while the Indian was doing the job.

"Don't know 'bout that. Cut up lots, though. This big bear, fat, juicy, good steaks; try 'em in the morning, eh?"

"Yes, if you think the meat will be good," returned St. Clair. "We have eaten bear meat once since we have been in the woods this trip, and we did not like it very well."

"Not in good order, prob'bly. This bear just right, feed on nuts and berries, prime, cook well."

"Supper!" suddenly called Drake, and everybody made a rush for the table, for it was now nearly eight o'clock, and the boys were hungry.

After the dishes had been washed that evening, Drake brought forth a banjo that he had borrowed for use on this trip from one of the guests at the hotel, and,

getting seated to his satisfaction, began picking away on the strings, in a manner that made the Indian's eyes open wide with astonishment, and filled his soul with joy, if the expression on his face could be taken as a criterion of his inner feelings.

Now, if there was anything that Drake could do better than anything else, it was to play the banjo. He had not only taken several quarters' lessons from Dobson, that master of the darkey's favorite instrument, but he had a natural talent for it, and had surprised his teacher with his performances even before taking any lessons, who had told him that he could play better than half the banjoists who travelled with variety troupes then, and his course of instruction under such an artist as Dobson had given a finish and brilliancy to his touch that not one amateur in a thousand was possessed of, and that but few regular performers could equal.

The Indian had undoubtedly heard a banjo played before that evening, indeed, he spoke of it afterward, but he had never heard one played as this young stranger from the city played it, and Drake's performance held him spellbound. But when, after half an hour of instrumental music, Drake suddenly announced, "Opening chorus, fellows," and the boys began a double-part song with their trained and musical voices, accompanied by Drake, the Indian could not sit still, but, springing nervously to his feet, walked back and forth, listening with ears intent on the harmonious sounds around him.

It was doubtful if Tadpole had ever listened to so

good a concert as he heard in the next hour, and it made a deep impression on him. He never forgot that clear September night by the quiet waters of the lake, under the high canopy of the blue heavens, studded with glittering stars of gold, and surrounded by the leafy walls of the perfumed and silent forests, when his soul was first awakered to the power of music, and feelings new and strange took possession of him.

"Eleven o'clock!" shouted Claude, suddenly, at the close of one of the songs. "Is this to be an all-night concert, or are we going to bed some time?"

"Eleven o'clock?" repeated Robbins, looking at his watch. "My stars! you're right, Claude. I am going to bed now, and the rest of you had better follow, or you'll all be as hoarse as bull-frogs in the morning. Good night! ta! ta! Over the river, George," and the member from Florida led the way to the camp.

Tadpole did not sleep in the camp that night, he crawled off into the bushes by himself. The sweet sounds he had heard, ringing in his ears, and surging through his brain, the musical murmur repeating itself again and again, so wrought upon his feelings, that it was nearly three o'clock in the morning when his excitement burned itself out, and he was able to woo the drowsy god successfully.

For breakfast the next morning, Wednesday, some of the best steaks were cut from the bear and broiled, and the boys found them very good, much better, in fact, than any they had eaten before. They planned to take dinner that day at the Forks, where the waters of the Grand Fourche mingle with those of Squa-took,

and, as they had but comparatively few miles to row or paddle, they did not leave camp until after nine o'clock.

As the open season for fishing was nearly at a close, the party had concluded to go up above the Big Jam on the Toledi, and camp there that night, and have the best part of the day for fishing.

On their way to the Forks, the Indian saw a moose on the right-hand bank, and called the attention of the boys to it; but, before any of them were ready to shoot, it scented them and disappeared in the woods.

They reached the mouth of the Toledi River in season to have dinner at half past twelve, and, while they were eating the meal, the Indian asked them if they knew how to pole a boat.

"Quick water up to Big Jam. Have to pole all the way. You know how to do him?"

"We will let you take the lead," replied Claude, "and I guess we can follow you. We have done considerable poling on our different trips."

"Not long distance — only a mile to Big Jam," remarked Tadpole.

"We are good for any number of miles," declared Wingate. "Only, I hope we shall find some fish after we get there."

"Find him sure. Heap fish; not very big, perhaps," returned the Indian.

As they had agreed among themselves to take their dinner where they now were the next day, they left a few things that could be dispensed with for a short time, hiding them so they would be out of the way of stray parties if any came along.

Leaving their noonday bivouac about half past one, in an hour they had reached the Big Jam, and then were obliged to make a short portage. They had come up the river without difficulty, and it was only a half-hour's work to unload and carry around the obstruction, and just after three they went into camp a little above the Jam, on the north side of the stream.

Two hours were devoted to preparing a shelter on the night, and then the entire party went out fishing, continuing the sport until dark, taking in that time over one hundred trout, the largest in the lot weighing two pounds.

Supper was late again that night, and the evening was well advanced before the circle gathered around the campfire.

"Come, Tadpole," remarked Claude to the Indian, who stood near him, lost in thought, "spin us a yarn. We entertained you last night; you must return the compliment, and entertain us to-night. Isn't that so, fellows?"

"Yes, yes," cried all the boys.

"Tadpole has the floor to-night," added Wingate.

"I tell um story to-night, you speak some more sweet music to-morrow night, eh?" queried the Indian, gazing around the circle.

"Yes, sir," replied Robbins, laughing; "we'll sing like nightingales, and if Drake don't play for us we'll break the banjo over his head. How is that, Drake?"

"That's all right, George. If you think you're smart enough to do it."

"I tell you story long time ago," said the Indian,

pausing a moment to think before he began his narrative, and during which time he filled and lighted his pipe.

"Twenty years ago, first moon this month, two Frenchmen, brothers, wanted me to go on trapping and hunting trip with them, and each man furnish his share traps, ammunition, and provisions, and we were to share alike when furs were sold in Quebec.

"We all live at Grand Falls then, and we start up Salmon River and go over into the Restigouche country, where we stay three weeks, and then cross over to Rimouski waters, where we stay three weeks more.

"Have good luck all the time. Kill lot of beavers, saple, otter, caribou, and moose, and get big pile fur.

"The 1st of November we were to start for Quebec. That morning, after breakfast, I feel sick — get worse every minute, and think I am going to die. The oldest Frenchman, François, say, 'You keep still, and be all right soon. We pack up.'

"I lay back on the boughs, and pretty soon I know nothing. When I wake up it was dark, and François and Jean were gone. I try to get up, but so weak couldn't do it, and keep still, and in the morning I wake and find myself all alone.

"I crawl outdoors and succeed in getting fire, after long while trying, but could find nothing to eat. Food all gone, rifle gone, axe gone, everything gone, then I know those two Frenchmen big rascals and try to poison me."

"That was a mean trick," cried Wood, indignantly.

"I guess you think so. I only have clothes I have

on. Nights awful cold, and no blankets. The nearest place I could get to was Edmundston. So try hard to get there. Crawl all first day, and eat bark, moss, leaves, few checkerberries, anything I can find.

"That night quite a snow fall. Next morning still weak, but not so sick, and after a while stagger to my feet. Travel all day till sun down, then build a fire. Found a place to lay under some bushes where the ground was bare, and go to sleep again and nearly freeze.

"Next day, 'bout noon, see partridge, and manage to kill it with a stick; build a little fire, and half cook it, and eat him all. After that feel better. That afternoon reach a camp we had left on the Rimouski. Find little piece pork, and two or three potatoes, and have 'em for supper.

"Next morning, start off without anything to eat, and, after some hours, find old caribou carcass with some meat on it. Smell bad — but eat him all the same."

The boys laughed at this announcement, and Wingate said, "I suppose that meat was well seasoned, Tadpole."

"S'pose he was," replied the Indian, laughing. "After I eat all I could hold, start on again, and strike for headwaters Tuladie, and find him at sundown. That night I kill two mush-squash."

"What's that?" interrupted Wood.

"Musk-rat you call him, and have them for my supper. Next day get down to Forks, and find three

logs on lake shore; fasten them together, and paddle down lake, and sleep at outlet that night."

"Didn't you see anybody that could help you, all this time?" inquired Foster.

"Not a soul. Catch mush-squash again that night. But raft easier than waiking, and in two days more reach Edmundston, where I find friends."

"And did you never see the scoundrels that played you such a mean trick?" queried Maynard.

"No, never see um. Went west, I guess."

"Well, they ought to have been hanged," declared Le Roy.

"So I say, too," added Tadpole.

"I am going to turn in," announced Claude. "We must get up early in the morning, if we wish to have good sport again with the trout."

"I think I feel sleepy myself," remarked St. Clair, rising with a stretch and a yawn. "Tadpole, what time are you going to get us out to-morrow morning?"

"Four o'clock, if you want catch lots of trout."

"If that's the time we are to turn out, I am going to turn in," declared Wood, and the entire party were soon in slumber.

The Indian was up about three o'clock, Thursday morning, and replenished the fire, and, after it had burned up warm and bright, called the young fellows, who were soon out and dressed.

It was scarcely light when they started forth on their last morning's fishing, and the air was so sharp and crisp that it made their ears and noses tingle, and kept them rubbing their hands.

"It's cold enough to freeze the legs off an iron pot, and on again," growled Wood, his teeth chattering with the cold. "I wish I hadn't turned out."

"You'll be warm enough when you get to pulling in trout," suggested Le Roy, "and it will do you good to get up in the morning. Give you an appetite for breakfast."

"Do you call this morning? Why, it isn't light yet."

"Put on your glasses, Wood," sang out St. Clair, "or go back to camp and get a candle."

As only two could fish in a boat, and have casting room, Tadpole took Maynard into his canoe, and Le Roy and St. Clair were placed at different points along the river, and by the time it was fairly light everybody was ready, and the sport began.

And sport it proved to be. For it seemed as if the river was alive with trout, and all of them in a famishing state. No sooner did a fly light upon the water, than one, two, and sometimes even three trout, rose to the deceitful lure, and almost fought for the chance to take it.

The fish were not very large, however, and two-thirds the boys caught they were enabled to land without the aid of their nets; this, however, allowed them to take more than they otherwise would, and for nearly two hours the party had all the fishing they wanted, and at six o'clock declared they had caught all they could take care of, and they returned to camp.

"Give us some of the trout for breakfast, will you, Drake?" asked Foster, as the cook began his prepara-

tions for the morning meal. "There's an aching void in me that needs filling."

"There's always an aching void in you," shouted Robbins, who had heard Foster's remark, "but it is generally in the top of your head."

Foster made a rush for his friend, but Robbins was not to be caught napping, and started into the woods. Foster chased him awhile, but finally gave it up.

"How many trout did we catch, Claude?" inquired Wood, who was helping the assistant cook dress some of the fish, the Indian likewise being thus engaged.

"I don't know. Have not had time to count them."

"I will, then, after you get enough dressed for breakfast. How many do you want?"

"Thirty will be enough."

The required number were soon cleaned, and then Wood counted the balance, and found that there was exactly four hundred left.

"Four hundred and thirty trout. That is pretty good fishing for one morning," said Wood.

"I never had better sport in my life," replied Drake, as he began frying the cleaned trout, while Tadpole took care of the others.

"Where is the best place for moose, Tadpole?" queried Drake, while they were eating breakfast. "I want to shoot a moose the worst kind."

"Up to the head of the Big Lake, good place. I make moose horn out of birch bark. Call moose close up to you."

"Is that so? Can you?" queried Drake, his eyes sparkling with excitement.

"We go up Big Lake. I get you bull moose, sure. No get moose, need not pay me one cent when we get back."

"Do you mean Temiscouata, by Big Lake, Tadpole?" inquired Claude.

"Yes."

"Then, we'll go there. I wouldn't mind having another crack at a moose myself. What do you say, fellows? There is no especial need of our being back to Edmundston Saturday night."

Everybody expressed a favorable opinion, and it was decided to go to the lake that night, which they could easily do, the distance being only twenty miles, and then go to the head of Temiscouata the next day.

They left camp at half past seven, and ran the rapids to the mouth of the Grand Fourche, without any trouble. After passing the forks, the water was deep and sluggish, and they were enabled to row all the rest of the distance to the lake, except over the falls.

They stopped on the west shore of the First Toledi Lake for dinner, at one o'clock, started again at half past two, and reached the lake, landing just above Thertiault's cabin at five o'clock. The run over the falls, a mile above Temiscouata, was a lively one, and they would have undoubtedly come to grief had they not followed close in the Indian's wake, who was ahead in his canoe.

"By gracious, I wish that camp was open!" exclaimed Drake, as they landed.

"So do I," echoed Claude, "but as it is not, and as

no fellow in this crowd, I suppose, wishes to break into it, the boys must construct a shelter of some kind, while we are getting supper. It is so late, you had better help them, Tadpole, and Rob and I will find our own fuel."

They passed an uneventful night where they had camped, but it was very cold, and when they awoke, in the morning, they looked out on a dreary, gray blank. The lake had vanished. Everything had vanished, being concealed by the thick mist, which was almost equal to rain.

"Confound it," cried Claude, "I thought we should get to the head of the lake by noon, but we are lucky if we get there by night."

"What do you mean?" inquired Wood.

"I mean that it is doubtful if this vapor lifts until nine or ten o'clock, and we can't start until it does."

"But the Indian knows the way up the lake."

"Yes, so do I. Follow the shore and you'll get there, but that is a long road."

"We can row by compass," said Drake.

"We can't pull a very straight course, because, in the first place, we have to guess at it. I think the cheapest way in the end will be to wait until the fog lifts, and then we can see where we are going, and pull a comparatively straight course."

Most of the party were of Claude's opinion, as they knew that he always leaned toward the safe side, and it was decided to get the boats and canoe loaded after breakfast, but not to embark until the lake was clear.

When one is all ready to start out, and force of

circumstances necessitates his waiting, it is an irksome task ; and when nine o'clock arrived, and the fog still lay low with stubborn pertinacity, the boys began to growl.

They soon found that growling did not help the matter any, and, to pass the time away, began pitching quoits, using the most suitable stones they could find in the vicinity for the game.

They worried through an hour in this way, the Indian taking a hand with them, but still the fog held on, and a renewed chorus of growls were wasted on the morning air.

But at half past ten, when they had about concluded they were going to have a Black Friday, or something worse, the vapor began circling into the air, and drifting down the lake, and in a few moments, as if by magic, their way was clear and well defined. Behind them, however, a big bank of the obnoxious vapor still concealed the shores in that direction ; but for this they did not care, as they were going the other way.

CHAPTER XVII.

MOOSE-SHOOTING.

"THANK the Lord, we can start," remarked St. Clair, as the boats were launched. "How far shall we go before dinner? Half-way?"

"I think we had better," returned Claude.

As the boys did not wish to run away from Tadpole, they pulled an easy stroke, and the three boats and the canoe kept along as closely as they could without interfering with each other's sea room.

They saw a number of loons while going up the lake, but only a few shots were fired at them, and none were killed. Every time one of the boys would fire, a taunting cry from one of the birds would come floating towards the party, as if these quick-sighted water fowl were laughing at them.

"Those hard birds to kill," cried Tadpole, as he noticed the futile efforts of the young marksmen.

"It is just like shooting into a feather bed, to put a charge into one of them," declared Le Roy.

At one o'clock they landed on the end of a point that projected out from the east shore of the lake, and stopped there an hour and a half for dinner.

After the fog had lifted the sun had shone out brightly, and the day promised to be pleasant. But

about noon it began to cloud up, and by the time the boys were ready to leave the point where they had taken their dinner it had every appearance of rain.

"It is going to storm to-night, fellows," remarked Claude, as the boats were launched. "I guess there will be no calling for moose to-night."

"It looks enough like it," acquiesced Maynard, "and we must build a good camp to-night. A storm is apt to last several days at this season of the year."

"I know good logging camp at head of lake, at mouth of stream in northeast corner," said the Indian.

"Isn't it full of lice and fleas?" questioned Robbins, with a grin.

"Guess not. We can see. Nobody been in it this year, and it's large enough for all. Yes, plenty room for even more than we are."

"We can inspect it and see what it looks like," remarked Claude.

The *Swallow* was under way first, and the boys saw that Tommy was up to his old tricks, for he whispered a few words to his crew, and immediately the *Swallow* dashed off at a speed that would have been creditable to one of her swift-winged namesakes.

"So that is your game, Captain Le Roy, is it?" questioned Foster, as the *Petrel's* crew launched her and jumped in.

"If I see anybody where we stop, I'll tell them you are coming," called back Tommy, derisively.

"There's going to be a race!" cried Robbins. "In with the *Daisy*, fellows. We don't wish to be more

than a thousand miles behind when those chaps run ashore at the head of the lake. Good-bye, Tadpole, old boy, see you later." And, to the Indian's gratification and amusement, the boys started off at a pace that left it useless for him to attempt to follow them closely.

In spite of Tommy's blowing, he had only been able to gain about six boat's-lengths on the *Petrel* before her crew had settled down to business, and only three boat's-lengths farther behind came the *Daisy*.

Ever since the brush on Brassau, all of the party had been secretly longing for a good chance for a race, although they would all have preferred to pull when their boats were not loaded; but, as Tommy had thrown down the gauntlet, the other two crews were not only willing but anxious to pick it up.

There was not much wind, only a slight ripple, and the water was in good condition. The boats were quite evenly loaded, and each carried about the same number of pounds, and there were no drawbacks for any boat to claim allowance for. The course was about seven miles, and lay in almost a straight line.

"Tommy, if you had kept your mouth shut a little longer, we should have got about thirty or forty feet more start of those fellows," said Maynard, who was watching the boats behind him.

"I know it, Frank; but, if we had, then they would cry baby if we beat them."

"Of course they would, Tommy," added the stroke oarsman of the *Swallow*. "If we beat, we have got to do it by over six boat-lengths, which was about the

advantage we started with. We ought all to have drawn up in line and started at the same time."

Tommy did not make any reply, for he felt the truth of Wingate's remarks, as did also Maynard, who had spoken to the coxswain without a second thought. Frank was a fair-minded fellow, and had he thought twice would have spoken differently.

The race now became exciting, for the *Daisy* began to gain a trifle on the *Petrel*, and in half an hour was even with her, but St. Clair and Wood were pulling a very fast stroke, and it was a matter of doubt how long they could keep it up.

Tommy was surprised to see the *Daisy* overhaul the *Petrel*, for he feared the latter boat the most, but he was still more surprised when the *Daisy* began to lap by the *Petrel* and crawl up toward the *Swallow*.

He took two or three looks behind him, and the last one showed him the *Daisy* clear beyond the *Petrel*, some three feet ahead, at least. This frightened him, and, increasing the motion of his body, he said, "Pull, fellows, pull for all you're worth. Don't let the *Daisy* beat us."

For another half-hour the *Daisy* and the *Swallow* were sent through the water at a tearing pace, and in that time the *Swallow* had doubled the distance from the *Petrel*, and the *Daisy* was about as far ahead of the *Petrel* as the *Swallow* had been when the boats started.

But both Robbins and Le Roy had overworked their crews, and the *Daisy* began to lag, and shortly the *Petrel* was even with her, while the *Swallow* was also losing some of the advantage she had gained.

As related in "Eastward Ho!" the first volume of this series, Foster had proved himself a remarkably good coxswain, and he had forgotten none of his early training. As he looked at the other boats at this stage of the race, and saw that in less than thirty minutes they would be to the shore for which they were heading, the motions of his body grew quicker and quicker, until finally he was giving his crew the same stroke that the other two boats' crews had been pulling for the last half-hour.

The result was that the *Petrel* began to forge ahead, and Tommy, who kept one eye over his shoulder half the time, began to get excited.

"The *Petrel* is gaining on us," he cried to his crew, and then turned and took another look, as if doubting the evidence of his eyesight the first time.

But there was no mistake about it, the *Petrel* was overhauling the *Swallow* fast, and Tommy, in desperation, began paddling.

"Don't paddle, Tommy," said Wingate, "you do more hurt than you do good. You notice Foster is not paddling. Just steer as straight a course as you can, and we'll do our best. You have made a mistake; you worked us too hard in the first of the race."

"I am afraid that is so," acknowledged Tommy, as he ceased paddling.

Foot by foot the *Petrel* crept up to them, until her bow was even with the stern of Tommy's boat, and then, to his chagrin, the *Petrel* slid ahead of him and passed the *Swallow* at a speed that Tommy thought was wonderful, when he saw the exertions his own crew were making.

As the *Petrel* passed entirely by the *Swallow*, Foster turned around and touched his hat to Tommy, and said, "Don't forget to tell them we are coming, Tommy. Ta, ta! See you later."

It was painfully evident to Tommy that the *Swallow* had lost the first place in the race, and he turned to see where the *Daisy* was. One glance in her direction, however, assured him that he had nothing to fear from her, as she was slowly dropping behind all the time.

"We shall beat the *Daisy*, at all events," said Tommy, when he felt sure of his statement.

"Yes, and I think we should have beat the *Petrel* had you followed Foster's tactics. He has shown better judgment in this race than you have. Excuse plain speaking, Tommy. Don't get mad, and do better next time."

"I don't intend to get mad, Charlie. I can see you are right, and the *Petrel* will beat us fifty yards sure."

Ten minutes later the boats were all on shore, and their tired crews walking about stretching their limbs. The canoe of the Indian could be seen two miles down the lake, a mere speck on the water.

The boys had landed on the east side of the stream, and, as soon as they were fairly rested, began looking about for the camp.

"Here is a path leading somewhere," cried St. Clair, who was at the edge of the woods.

"Let us follow it," said Claude.

It ran back about a hundred and fifty yards from the lake, in a half-circle, that brought the party in sight of the stream, on the bank of which stood the

camp, a structure large enough to accommodate fifty or sixty men. The building was in very good order, and apparently contained all the furniture that had been in it when last occupied.

"Great guns! there's a stove here. Isn't this first-class, fellows!" exclaimed Drake.

"Quite a hotel," acknowledged St. Clair.

"What a lot of bunks!" said Wood.

"Yes, Dave," replied Claude, with a twinkle in his eye, "you can sleep in two at the same time if you wish."

The boys all laughed, and began a general investigation of the premises, but they found nothing in the way of provisions, and an old axe that had seen its best days was all they discovered beside the furniture and cooking utensils.

The party now returned to the boats and paddled up the river opposite the camp, and then unloaded them, and by the time Tadpole arrived everything was under cover.

"That was good race," said the Indian, as he began unloading his birch. "All good boys — pull strong — but Petrels beat."

"Yes, the *Petrel* beat us," added Le Roy, "but we gave them a good trial."

Drake and Claude had supper ready early, as Tadpole was going out with some of the party moose-hunting that night. He explained to the boys that it would not do for them all to go, there were so many of them, and suggested that they camp where they were until Tuesday morning, and that he would take three of the party out each night.

The fellows agreed to this, and drew lots after supper to see who should compose the first party. Six white beans and three colored ones were put into a hat, and shaken up a little, and Tadpole held it up high enough to prevent the boys looking into it and then each one picked out a bean. Foster, Drake and St. Clair drew the prizes, and they at once prepared for the start.

They left the camp about half past seven, all armed with rifles, the Indian carrying, besides, his moose-horn, with which he hoped to coax a moose within shot. Drake accompanied the Indian in his canoe, and Foster and St. Clair went in the *Petrel*.

Paddling out of the river into the lake, they followed the shore to the north-west corner, and here they landed, the three boys taking refuge behind a large boulder. Then Tadpole went into his canoe again, and paddled off a few rods from shore, and blew a long blast with his horn. The call echoed out through the forest, but no answer came back, save the wind gently blowing across the lake and rustling the leaves on the trees around them.

Again Tadpole sent out the queer note to tempt the curiosity of some old bull, and, after waiting a few moments, repeated the call. The boys now heard an answer, and their blood began to quicken. The Indian again drew the weird sounds from his horn, and in a few seconds another answer followed. Soon after this they heard a cracking in the forest off to the left of where they lay hid; rifles were cocked, and hopes were high.

"We shall have to fire by guesswork," whispered St. Clair. "It is darker than Egypt. I can't see the sights on my rifle."

"Nor I," acknowledged Foster.

A few moments later and the boys saw a huge, dark, moving body emerge from the forest, and step out on the sand. The hunters were to leeward, and the animal did not scent them.

"Fire now," whispered St. Clair, and the three rifles spoke almost as one. The animal wheeled around toward the woods, and again the three rifles spoke.

The moose leaped ahead, but did not go four rods before he fell dead. The boys, who had sprung to their feet, gave a cheer when they heard the crash as the forest monarch came to the ground, and the next moment Tadpole was with them. He lit a lantern he had brought in his canoe, and then the party started toward the moose, from whom they had not heard a sound since his fall.

They found the animal lying on his side, as dead as Julius Cæsar, and he looked immense in the gloom of the forest.

"He big moose — weigh thousand pounds, I guess," said Tadpole. "Cut out his tongue to-night, and come over and skin him and cut him up in the morning."

"Hold your lantern close, Tadpole. Let's see where he was hit," remarked St. Clair.

Upon examination they found three bullet holes on the uppermost side, but the huge brute was too heavy to turn over, and they could not tell whether any other shots had taken effect.

The Indian, however, declared that the animal must have been hit in the other side, as two of the shots they saw would not have made a fatal wound.

After Tadpole cut out the tongue they returned to camp, and found their friends in their bunks, but not asleep.

"What luck, fellows?" queried Wood.

"Bull luck," answered Drake. "Shot a bull moose."

"Honest Injun?"

"Yes, sir. You can ask Tadpole if we didn't, and he's an 'honest Injun.'"

"Did you get a moose, really, Andrew?" inquired Claude, rising up on one elbow in his bunk, and facing his friend.

"True as preaching, Claude, and Tadpole brought the tongue home for breakfast."

"Was he a large one?" cried Maynard.

"The guide says he will weigh a thousand pounds," answered Foster.

"You're in luck again, Foster," remarked Tommy from his corner, thinking of the boat race.

"It must have been pretty dark for shooting," said Robbins.

"It was as dark as a stack of black cats," asserted St. Clair. "All we could see when the moose came out of the woods was a black spot, and we banged away without taking any particular aim. To tell you the truth, George, I couldn't see the sights on my rifle. But, then, the old heathen was not over thirty feet away when we fired, and we had to hit him somewhere. Couldn't help it, you see."

Just as the hunting party turned into their bunks it began to sprinkle, and before the boys fell asleep it rained hard, and the wind rose to nearly a gale.

"I guess we shall have a wet time cutting up that moose in the morning," remarked St. Clair, as he listened to the howling of the storm.

"I don't mind it in the morning," returned Claude, "but we are fortunate to have such comfortable quarters to-night."

"We no sugar — no salt — no melt; let um rain in the morning. Get wet — fire dry," remarked Tadpole, from the Deacon seat by the stove, where he was having his last smoke before turning in.

"You're a philosopher, Tadpole," cried Wingate.

"Um. So any man no fool."

"Come, keep your tongues still and go to sleep, will you?" urged Le Roy. "It's most midnight."

"All right, Tommy," replied Wingate, "set us an example."

"I've been quiet for fifteen minutes."

"You are not now," chuckled Wood.

"Yes, I am."

"Don't make so much noise, Tommy, — let a fellow sleep, can't you?" cried Robbins.

"Hold your hush!" shouted Maynard.

An immense counterfeit snore from Claude now set the fellows all laughing, and St. Clair shouted, "Put him out!"

"Snuff him!" called Wood.

"Extinguish him!" cried Drake.

In the midst of the hubbub, Tadpole, who was not

without considerable dry humor, arose from his seat and said, "Things nice and quiet now; guess I turn in and go to sleep."

As one could hardly hear his own voice in the camp at that moment, Tadpole's remark brought down the house, and, amid a shout of laughter, Wingate sang out, "Good for you, Tadpole, old boy; go to sleep, but keep your eyes open and see that you don't snore."

But the boys became tired of their frolic after a while, and one after another dropped off in slumber.

Saturday morning found the rain falling steadily, but not so hard as it had during the night, and, the moment breakfast was over, the whole party, with the exception of Drake and Le Roy, who stopped at camp to cut wood, launched the boats and pulled around to the scene of the conflict.

Tadpole led the way to where the huge animal lay stretched out. From appearances, the moose had fallen on his knees, and then rolled over on his left side. Wood was the only one of the party who had never seen a moose close by, and he was astonished at his size.

"By gracious!" he exclaimed, "he's as large as a horse."

"He big moose," acknowledged the Indian, "but have seen larger one."

Under the Indian's direction, they began skinning the moose, and cutting him up, a job that occupied them the greater part of the time for the next three hours.

"I guess we shall have meat enough now," remarked Wood, as they began to carry it to Tadpole's canoe.

The antlers and skin were in good condition, and were put into the *Petrel*, and Tadpole promised to take care of them.

The party arrived back at the camp at half past eleven, and the meat was properly taken care of, and then Tadpole, with the help of Claude, Maynard, and Wingate, stretched the hide on one of the walls of the camp, outdoors.

The rain had now held up, but it was too wet to move about in the woods much, and the boys passed the greater part of the afternoon in cutting fuel, and bringing it into the camp, putting up two or three huge piles near the stove.

Before supper they drew lots to see who should form the party that night for a moose hunt, and Claude, Wood, and Maynard were the lucky ones.

At half past seven they left camp, and Tadpole went down the lake this time on the eastern side, until he reached a small cove, and at the head of this he landed. Looking about, he noticed from which quarter the wind came, and then placed the boys in ambush, and, getting into his canoe, a stroke or two of the paddle carried it the right distance away, and then out upon the stillness of the night rolled the queer call from the big birch moose horn.

When Wood heard it the first time, he jumped as if he had been shot, and his companions were greatly pleased, and perpetrated a few quiet jokes at his expense.

After the Indian had been calling some fifteen minutes, they heard an answer, and the noise was repeated from time to time by the old bull, as he thought he was listening to his lady love.

Nearer came the responses from the forest, until by the sound they judged the moose would soon be on the lake shore, the signal for firing, when suddenly an owl that had lit in a tree almost over their heads came out with a "tu whit, tu whit, tu whoo!" and Wood jumped a foot into the air, his rifle going off at random, and the old moose turned and made tracks in the opposite direction.

Claude and Maynard were both mad, but they could not help laughing to save their lives, and they roared until the tears ran down their cheeks. The Indian paddled to shore, and was disappointed at the way the thing had turned; he said it would be no use to try again that night, and they started back to camp, reaching it at nine o'clock.

None of the party had retired, and when the camp door opened and the hunters suddenly appeared they were besieged with questions.

"Did you see any game?"

"Did you shoot a moose?"

"What luck?"

"Were you successful?"

"Where did you go?"

These were a few of the questions that were fired at them by their friends in camp, and, as soon as Claude could hear himself speak, he said with a laugh:—

"Maynard and I had the luck fever, and did not

fire. Dave was the only one of the party that pulled trigger, but I doubt if he shot anything," and then the speaker went into a fit of laughter, in which he was joined by Maynard and Tadpole, while Wood looked as glum as a hired mourner at an old English funeral.

"You seem to be mighty pleased about something, Claude. What is it? Don't keep it all to yourself," said Wingate.

"Ask Dave," returned Claude, as he hung up his rifle.

"What is the joke, Dave?" inquired St. Clair. "You don't act as if there was any fun in it."

"Dave can't see where the laugh comes in," explained Maynard.

"No, I can't," retorted Wood. "There was a confounded old owl in a tree over our heads, and he made such an infernal noise, it startled me a little, and my rifle went off accidentally, and frightened the moose away."

A shout of laughter rang through the camp at Dave's explanation.

"Did you shoot the owl, Dave?" inquired Foster, when the laughter had subsided a little.

"No. But I would have killed him if I could," replied Wood, savagely.

Maynard gave a more detailed explanation of how they had lost the moose, or, rather, lost the chance of having a shot at him, and his graphic description of the event set the whole party into another shout of laughter, in which Wood finally joined himself, although

at first disposed to resent Frank's humorous account of the night's incident.

Sunday morning the boys slept late, and it was ten o'clock when they were through breakfast. Claude and Foster were the cooks for that week, Drake's time having expired Saturday night, and Claude announced after the morning meal that he should not get dinner until four o'clock, and if anybody was hungry in the meantime he might eat whatever he could find cooked.

It was a rough cold day, with frequent snow squalls of short duration, and the party were glad to stay indoors, passing the time in reading and singing.

Tadpole, however, started out after breakfast, and did not return until nearly four o'clock, and was just in time for dinner. He had been tramping for about six hours, and was as hungry as a bear in the spring.

"Um, dinner smell good," he remarked, as he drew up to the stove to warm himself.

"It will be ready in ten minutes," said Claude. "You came just at the right time."

"Where have you been, Tadpole?" inquired Maynard.

"Been looking for signs. Find lots. Game thick around here. Moose, caribou, deer, bear, and foxes."

"Any owls?" queried Drake, with a glance toward Wood.

"Oh, let up on the owl business, can't you?" asked Dave.

"I hope you yarded a moose for us, and will keep him all night until to-morrow night," said Le Roy.

"Guess we find moose to-morrow night, sure," answered the Indian, looking as if he felt pretty certain of it.

That evening the boys had another concert, introducing a number of hymns from the Moody and Sankey collection, and Tadpole was delighted. The Indian would have been glad to have listened to the music all night if he could only have kept the boys up, but at eleven o'clock Le Roy said that he was tired enough to go to bed, and he started; the others followed, for they were all getting sleepy.

Monday morning, after breakfast, Foster, Drake, and Wood took the *Petrel* and went out on the lake ducking, and had quite an unpleasant experience. For about ten o'clock the wind, having come out from the northwest, had increased to a gale, and a frightful sea was running on the lake, rendering it impossible for them to get back to camp until seven o'clock in the evening, and the only food they had during the day was a couple of ducks that they half roasted over a fire on the beach. They had very good luck in shooting, however, and returned with nineteen black ducks and six wood ducks, which were all fine eating.

Maynard, St. Clair, and Tadpole went out on one of the logging roads to shoot partridges, and returned to camp at noon with thirteen.

Robbins, Wingate, and Le Roy, who were going with Tadpole in the evening after a moose, started off together after breakfast to see if they could find any large game; they saw plenty of tracks of deer and caribou, but did not find the animals that

had made them, and they returned to dinner empty-handed.

"Go down to the lake, will you, Frank," said Claude, when dinner was ready, as he began to place the food on the table, "and see if you can see anything of the *Petrel*."

"I go," offered Tadpole, and he was off like an arrow.

"If they went any distance down the lake, they can't get back till night," remarked Maynard, "for the wind is blowing a gale, and it must be awful rough. The wind would be dead ahead for them, and it would be hard pulling against it."

That is a fact, Frank, and I don't believe they will return very early. It would be a bad joke if the wind don't go down with the sun, and they should be wind-bound all night. I am afraid they would suffer with the cold."

"And nothing to eat, unless they shoot some ducks."

"By Jove, Frank, you are right. I guess they will be hungry when they get back."

"See um smoke way down the lake on leeward shore," announced the Indian, as he entered the camp.

"Big waves, wind blow crazy, lake all whitecaps. No get back till wind stops blowing."

"Then we may as well have dinner fellows, as there is no probability of their joining u.. If they have a fire going, they have probably shot something, and are trying to cook it."

"Ducks cooked without salt, butter, or pepper are pretty poor eating," remarked Robbins, as the boys drew up to the table.

"Better than wind pudding," sagely answered Le Roy.

After dinner, Robbins, Wingate, and Le Roy started out again, saying they were going for a caribou this time, and meant to bring one back with them.

CHAPTER XVIII.

FIGHT WITH A CATAMOUNT.

LEAVING the camp, they headed for the Toledi River, which was only a few miles distant in an easterly direction, and in a little over an hour reached it, and then followed up the western bank a short distance until they reached a runway, or trail, made by large game in crossing from the Toledi to the head of the lake.

They placed themselves in ambush on the leeward side of the trail, about a rod apart, and, lying down, began watching for game. They had agreed to shoot at nothing but a deer, moose, bear, or caribou. It was to be a still hunt, and not a word was spoken even in whispers.

About half an hour after they had taken their places a common red fox trotted along with a dead partridge in his mouth, and each fellow felt as if he would like to fire at Reynard, but, knowing that the report of their rifles might frighten away larger game, they resisted the temptation, and let the fox go his way unharmed.

Another half-hour slipped by, and during a lull in the wind they heard a noise of some animal approaching from the west of them. Robbins was the left-hand man, Wingate in the centre, he being considered the

best shot, and Le Roy had the right-hand position, nearest the Toledi.

As the sound came nearer, they all cocked their rifles and made ready to shoot.

The animal proved to be a large buck deer, and Robbins fired without arresting his course, but Wingate brought him down. He did not kill the animal, however, for the buck struggled to its feet, and just as it stood upright an animal of a dark brown color, a little larger than a fox, jumped from the limb of a tree near them, and, alighting on the deer's back, bore it to the ground.

The young hunters had sprung to their feet, when they saw the deer was not killed, and Wingate was about to fire again, when he noticed this dark body shooting through the air, and saw it take the deer down. Then, instead of firing at the deer, he fired at the strange animal, wounding it slightly.

The next moment the boys heard such a yell or screech as they had never heard before in their lives, and the animal sprang for Wingate, who stood about fifteen feet away.

Charlie saw it coming and dodged behind a large tree, just in time to get out of the animal's way, and as the savage beast struck the ground he fired at it, striking it in the fore shoulder.

The brute was as quick as lightning in its movements, for, before Wingate could fire the second time, it had sprung at him again, this time striking him in the breast, and knocking him flat, his rifle falling out of his hands, beyond his reach.

He came down on his back with such a thump that it nearly knocked the breath out of him, but he had strength enough left to draw his hunting knife and make a jab at the fierce brute, that was tearing his clothes to tatters and scratching his body badly besides.

If he had been alone it would have been the end of his fishing and hunting excursions, but Robbins, with much presence of mind, lay flat on his stomach, as he saw it was impossible to fire at the animal while standing without great danger of hitting Wingate, and, watching his chance, fired and made a handsome shot, sending a bullet through the animal's head, killing it instantly. It rolled off of Wingate and lay all in a heap, it not having life enough left even to straighten itself out.

While Robbins was getting on his feet, Le Roy, dropping his rifle, rushed up to Wingate, and, seizing his right hand, assisted him to rise.

"My stars, Charlie, it's a wonder that beast didn't kill you. Why, you are scratched all up. He has taken about all the skin off your breast."

"Yes, and a little of the flesh, too, I guess, by the feeling."

"My gracious!" exclaimed Robbins, "your shirts are torn to tatters, and your breast looks as if somebody had been lashing you. You will have to be mighty careful or you will take cold in those wounds."

"That's so. I owe my life to you, old boy, and I shall not forget it. That devil would have torn me all to pieces, but for your lucky shot."

"Let's go to the river and wash the blood off of you,

Charlie," said Le Roy, "and then we can see how bad you are hurt."

"All right, old fellow. I am only badly scratched, I guess, but that brute was getting in his work lively when George knocked him over. I shoved my hunting knife into him once clear to the hilt, and he did not seem to mind it any more than if I had stuck a pin into him. It's lucky I was not alone."

The river was only a few rods from them, and when they reached it Le Roy took Wingate's handkerchief and washed the blood away, and they saw that the skin was torn off of a large part of his breast, and quite a number of pieces of flesh, leaving small furrows, had been dug out by the animal's fearful claws.

"Perhaps that don't smart," remarked Wingate, as he looked at his wounded body.

"I'll bet it does," said Le Roy, "but you must be careful and not take cold in it. Let me have your handkerchief, George, and I'll put it with mine, and double them both and lay them over the wounded place, then you can button your hunting jacket tightly over it. It's lucky you kept that whole."

Tommy did all he could for his friend, and then they returned to where the dead animals lay, for the buck had never risen after the wild-cat, as the boys concluded to call the savage animal, had brought it to the ground.

Robbins picked up Wingate's rifle, and Tommy his, and they started slowly for camp, as Wingate did not feel like hurrying.

"We can send Tadpole over here to bring that animal

to camp," remarked Robbins, "and he will know what it is."

"And the buck, too," added Le Roy. "We don't want to leave his carcass here to spoil."

The party did not make very rapid progress, and it was half past four when they reached camp. In sight of the building they were joined by Maynard, St. Clair, and Tadpole, who each had a string of partridges, showing the way their time had been occupied since dinner.

"Did you shoot anything, fellows?" inquired St. Clair, as the two parties met.

"I should say we did," answered Robbins. "We killed a buck, and some fierce sort of an animal that fought like a tiger."

"What is the matter, Charlie?" queried Maynard. "You look pale."

"Then I look as I feel," returned Wingate. "I came mighty near being rubbed out. Guess I should have been only for Robbins."

"Great Scott! you don't mean it!" exclaimed St. Clair. "Come into camp, and tell us about it."

"His wounds must be attended to first," said Le Roy. "You never saw such a sight as his breast is. I only hope he won't take cold."

"I say, Tadpole," remarked Robbins, as the party entered the camp, "don't you know anything about doctoring? I think Charlie's wound needs something more than cold water. His flesh is scratched and torn fearfully."

"My father was great Indian doctor. Me look at him hurts, perhaps me cure him."

Wingate took off his jacket, and lay down in his bunk, and his friends gathered about him, while the Indian proceeded to make an examination of his wounds.

The handkerchief that lay next his body had become stuck to the flesh, and Claude soaked it off with warm water.

"My gracious!" exclaimed Tadpole. "You had lucky escape; little higher, and the brute would torn your throat open. Put on some good shirts and keep covered up, and I go and get some herbs. Make liniment in two hours that will help you," and without further words the Indian left the camp.

Claude and Le Roy helped Charlie get on a couple of whole shirts, and then he lay back in his bunk, and a clean handkerchief was spread over his wounds to keep his flannels from irritating them.

"I think I can judge something how the early colonists must have felt when they were scalped," remarked Wingate, with a faint attempt at a smile.

"I am awfully sorry for you, old fellow, and we will do everything possible for you. That must have been what the hunters up here call an 'Indian devil' that tackled you," said Claude.

"It was some member of the cat tribe," returned Wingate, "for it was as quick as lightning, and it had claws two or three inches long. It was too large for a common lynx or wild-cat, and the yells it gave were enough to frighten a fellow out of a seven years' growth."

"This is the worst accident any of us have ever met

with. You have come out of this fight in a worse shape than Adams did with the bear," remarked Claude, referring to an incident that happened to one of the party when on their trip down the West Branch.

"Jack was not scratched near so badly as Charlie is," said St. Clair. "You are going to carry the marks of your scrimmage a long while, even after your wounds heal up. It seems something providential that the brute did not tear your throat."

"He would if George had not shot him just as he did," and Wingate reached out his left hand toward Robbins, who took it in both of his, and gave it a warm squeeze.

"It's lucky George fired when he did," remarked Le Roy, "for I was so excited I was just going to fire from where I stood, and, if I had, I should have probably shot you as well as the animal."

"How did the affair happen, any way?" inquired Claude.

"Yes, give us the particulars," added Maynard.

Le Roy then told the story, giving all the facts in the case, and the boys all declared that Robbins had shown great presence of mind, in the way he had killed the brute.

Just then Tadpole returned with a water pail full of roots and herbs, and, taking a small iron kettle, he put a quart of water into it, and set it on the stove to boil.

"Want good fire now, Cap'n Claude," remarked Tadpole, who frequently addressed Claude as "Cap'n."

"All right, Tadpole. Tend to your roots and herbs,

and I'll give you all the fire you want," and Claude stuffed the stove full of small dry wood.

"I wonder if those fellows are going to get home to-night?" queried St. Clair. "It is most dark now. How was the wind, Tadpole? Died away any?"

"Wind changed. Blow from the south now. They get home all right, but we'll have big storm to-morrow."

"Do you think so?" inquired Le Roy.

"Know so, if wind don't change again at midnight."

"I hope those fellows will get here by seven o'clock," remarked Claude. "I want them to have a hot supper, for I don't imagine they had much of a dinner."

"I would not have supper until they come," proposed Le Roy. "No matter if it is late. I don't know how George feels, but I don't care to go out after moose to-night, now that Charlie can't go."

"Never mind me, fellows," spoke up Wingate. "Go out and have your fun. No matter if I can't go."

"Not if I know myself," returned George, warmly. "I want Tadpole to stay here and look after you."

"But I don't wish to spoil your pleasure," expostulated Wingate.

"You are only wasting your breath, Charlie. I shall not go an inch," returned Robbins.

"My sentiments, exactly," acquiesced Le Roy.

It was now half past six, and Claude began to get supper under way. Tadpole had mixed all his ingredients and had them steeping, and stirred the mixture

from time to time, tasting occasionally, to determine its strength.

"I am going down to the lake," announced Maynard, "to see if I can hear anything of the boys."

"It would not be a bad idea to build up a small fire on the shore," suggested Claude. "They will know some of us have kindled it, and they can steer a straighter course then."

"Quite right," agreed Maynard, and, taking an axe and lantern, he went out, accompanied by St. Clair, who had offered to go with him.

When the two boys cleared the shelter of the woods, they found the wind was blowing very hard, and it was too dark to distinguish so small an object as the *Petrel* any great distance away.

It took them fifteen minutes to prepare the material for a bonfire, but in that time they collected a good pile of the drift stuff which fringed the shore near them, and, having found a little dry birch bark, they applied a lighted match, and in a few moments more a royal blaze was leaping into the air, lighting up all around them.

Five minutes afterward, they heard the faint report of a rifle, followed by two more at short intervals, and they judged their friends saw the beacon they had kindled, and wished to notify them of it.

They threw several more large sticks on the fire, and then went to the edge of the forest, and sat down behind a large boulder, which sheltered them from the wind.

"They will be here soon," remarked Maynard, "for

they were only three miles down the lake at noon, so Tadpole said."

"I hope they will," returned St. Clair, "for it is getting uncomfortably cold."

They remained behind the boulder for fifteen minutes, and then went out to replenish the fire.

As they approached it, they heard a shout from the water, and in a few seconds more they were enabled to make out the *Petrel*, which was coming swiftly toward them, now on top of a huge roller, and then in the trough of the sea, out of sight.

"I believe the wind blows harder every moment," said Maynard, as a huge roller tumbled up on the sands, wetting their feet a little, before they had time to evade it.

"I think so myself," acknowledged St. Clair, "and I guess it will blow up a storm before it changes."

"They will have to tumble out of the boat lively when they land, or she will be swamped. Just see that big wave coming in."

"That is a rouser," replied St. Clair, and the boys stepped back a few paces to clear it.

"Here they are," shouted Maynard, and, a moment later, the *Petrel*, riding like a duck, came in on top of another huge roller, and her crew sprang out and ran her well up on the beach, to avoid the undertow.

"Hulloa, Frank! hulloa, Andrew!" exclaimed Foster, as he noticed his friends on the beach, "how is this for a rough night! I'll be hanged if I ever saw it blow as hard from two different directions as it has to-day. First a hurricane from the northwest, and then a gale

from the south. My stars! I thought we would be swamped before we reached here. The waves are fearful out on the lake, and they are growing worse all the time. I was mighty glad when I saw the flame of your fire shoot up into the air. It was a capital point to steer for."

"Yes, we thought it would be a help to you, and so came down and built it. Shot a few ducks, I see," and Frank stepped up to the boat, where Wood was taking them out.

"We managed to get twenty-five, and we should have brought home more if we had not been wind-bound."

"A little hungry, ain't you, fellows?" insinuated St. Clair.

"A little! You wait until I get to the table, and you'll find out whether I am hungry or not," observed Drake. "I believe I could eat railroad spikes, if there was nothing else."

"That wouldn't do. They would lie hard on your stomach," laughed Maynard.

"What have the rest of you been doing to-day?" inquired Drake.

"Frank and Tadpole and I have been out twice after partridges, and Robbins, Wingate, and Le Roy went out after dinner and shot a buck and a panther, or some other kind of a ferocious beast, and it scratched Charlie very badly."

"You don't mean it," said Foster.

"When you see Charlie you'll think I do. The brute jumped on him and knocked him down, tore his

shirts all to strings, and scratched his breast all up. There are three or four awful gashes on it. We should never have seen him alive again if George had not shot the confounded thing."

"Where did they run across it?" queried Drake.

"Over near the Toledi, about a couple of miles from camp. Tadpole is making some liniment now to put on his wounds."

"By gracious! that was a rough experience!" exclaimed Wood, looking nervously about him, as if he feared some other savage beast might appear suddenly from the forest and attack them.

The boys now took care of the boats, placing them in a sheltered nook, where they would neither be blown away nor filled with water by the gigantic waves that were thundering along the shore, and being driven higher up every few moments by the strong south wind. Then, Maynard leading with the lantern, the party made their way to the camp through darkness that could almost be felt.

"What in the world have you been doing, Charlie?" cried Foster, rushing up to the bunk where Wingate was lying, and, taking his hand, he gave it a friendly grasp.

"Had a little encounter with an animile, as one of those guides used to say at the Androscoggin Lakes, and I received hard usage."

"That is too bad. Hope you will get over it all right. Are you in any pain?"

"I don't know that I can exactly call it pain, but my flesh smarts all the time, just as a cut does when you

pour alcohol on it," and a grimace shot across Charlie's face.

"Well, if you don't call that pain, I should say it had a mighty close resemblance to it. Did your wounds bleed much?"

"Considerable. But not enough to weaken me any from loss of blood."

"Well, it's a mean shame, old fellow, and I wish there was something I could do for you to make you more comfortable."

Wood and Drake also expressed their sympathy in the kindest terms, and were very sorry for the mishap to their friend.

"Supper is ready, fellows," announced Claude. "Do you feel like coming to the table, Charlie?"

"Yes, I guess so. I always believe in eating when you can get a chance."

The Indian now took his kettle containing the liniment off of the stove, and set it outdoors to cool, and joined the boys at the table. During the meal Foster gave an account of their day's sport, and the fellows laughed when he described their dinner.

As soon as supper was over, Wingate undressed and turned into his bunk, and the Indian bathed his breast very carefully with the liniment, making, however, several applications.

"There, sir, you feel better to-morrow, and I get some different things in the woods and make you some medicine to take three times a day. Don't you fret 'bout this, I cure you all right. Tadpole good friend to you, because you treat him like a white man. You

good feller, all good fellers," looking around at the boys, and then, in an exuberance of feeling, adding something stronger that it is unnecessary to repeat here.

The Indian, who was no mean doctor, having learned a great deal of nature's healing art from his father, suggested to the boys that they had all better retire early that night and let Wingate sleep if he could, and then built up a good fire in the stove, and set on his kettle of liniment again, as he said it ought to steep more.

As all of the party would have done anything possible for their friend, they followed the Indian's advice and went to bed as soon as the dishes were cleared away, and lay quietly in their bunks until they fell asleep, dispensing with all talk or laughter.

None of the boys arose Tuesday morning until they saw Wingate was awake.

About seven o'clock Charlie opened his eyes and found the camp as still as a Quaker meeting.

"What is the matter, fellows?" he called out. "Are you all dead?" His watch hung where he could see it, and he noticed it was five minutes past seven.

"No, old man," answered Claude, "we did not wish to disturb you, and so did not get up."

"You are very kind, fellows, and I suppose the sleep did me good. I feel first-rate this morning."

"Hurrah!" shouted Maynard. "That is the way to talk," and the boys all cheered.

The noise brought Tadpole inside. He had turned out at five o'clock, and built the fire so noiselessly that nobody had heard him.

The fellows were all getting up now, with the exception of Wingate; and the Indian went over to Charlie's bunk, and said: "Feel better, eh? No smart this morning."

"Correct, Dr. Tadpole. The smarting and soreness are all gone. There must be something miraculous about that liniment."

"Berry good stuff, that. You lay still, I put him on some more," and the Indian examined Wingate's wounds, declared they were doing well, and made another application of the liniment.

After breakfast, all the party, with the exception of Claude, Foster, and Wingate, went to the scene of the conflict of the day before, and dressed the deer, and took the hide off of the animal which had so nearly been the death of Wingate, and which Tadpole pronounced one of the largest catamounts he had ever seen, and he acknowledged that he would not have cared to have met the animal alone himself.

The party reached camp on their return, at half past twelve, and at one o'clock they sat down to dinner. While they were eating, it began to rain, and in a short time the water was falling in torrents, and they all passed the afternoon in camp.

Tadpole had brought back with him the roots and herbs he needed for the internal medicine, and made it during the afternoon. He applied the liniment to Wingate's wounds after dinner, and about nine o'clock in the evening, and each time made a favorable report. The patient had eaten all his meals at the table, and had been up around the camp the greater part of the day.

During the night the storm blew itself out, and Wednesday morning broke bright and pleasant, and warmer than it had been before for a week, and there was scarcely a breath of wind stirring.

While they were eating breakfast, the party came to the conclusion that they would return to Edmundston, as they might not have so good a day to cross the lake again for a week, and the moment breakfast was over they began packing.

As Wingate was not in a condition to row or paddle, Tadpole proposed that he should take Charlie with him in his canoe, and Wingate readily assented. Tadpole then spread the skins of the deer, moose, and catamount in the bottom of his canoe, and arranged a roll of blankets, so that his passenger could lie down or sit up, just as he preferred. He also took a few of the other things in his canoe, loading it as heavily as he dared.

The venison and birds were then divided among the three boats, with the rest of the "collateral," and at nine o'clock the party headed for Degele's, where they intended to pass the night, whose cabin was a short distance below the foot of the lake.

The water was as smooth as a mirror, and the rocks and trees along the shore were perfectly reflected. It was so warm that the rowers found it uncomfortable, and the perspiration rolled down Tadpole's face in a stream, as he paddled his heavily laden birch.

It was agreed that they should take dinner on the shore of the lake, opposite Cloutier's, as they wished to get some sugar and milk at the hotel, and Claude told

Tadpole that the boats would push on to save time and have dinner all ready when he arrived with Wingate. As the boys could row their boats much faster than the Indian could paddle his birch, this seemed the best thing to do.

As they pulled down the lake, all the fellows declared the day was made to order, and they enjoyed the mildness of the weather and the beautiful scenery, as all lovers of nature do. It was too warm for racing, and, although they saw several flocks of ducks, none came within gunshot.

At one o'clock they reached the place where they intended to dine, and while Claude and Foster started a fire, and began to get dinner, Maynard and St. Clair went over to the hotel and purchased two quarts of milk, some sugar, and two apple pies.

Tadpole did not arrive until two o'clock, but when he came everything was ready, and the party sat down to dinner, without further loss of time.

At half past two Tadpole and Wingate left, and the boats followed in about fifteen minutes, passing the canoe in a very short time. During the afternoon, the boys made better time than they had in the morning, as they wished to reach as early as possible the place where they were to spend the night.

It was six o'clock, however, doing their best, when they reached the landing, and at seven they had supper ready, just in time for Wingate and Tadpole. After supper they went up to Degele's, to see if they could get lodging, and he offered them what accommodations he had, which were rather scanty. But as this

move had been planned by Claude simply so that Charlie could sleep under cover, and as Wingate was given a room and a bed to himself, the other members of the party took what they could get and said nothing, and, in fact, they had more fun than sleep during the night, for certain reasons, best known to themselves.

Thursday morning everybody was up bright and early, and Wingate reported himself as "feeling first-rate," which was welcome news to his friends. Claude and Foster prepared breakfast by the bank of the river, and at half past seven the party sat down to eat. At half past eight they had embarked, and were running down river with a favoring current.

The day was nearly as fine as Wednesday, and the sail down the river was a most enjoyable one. At half past eleven they stopped opposite Griffin's, sixteen miles from Edmundston, and cooked and ate their dinner. As they could make the remainder of the distance easily in four hours, they did not leave their bivouac until one o'clock.

The latter part of the day passed away as pleasantly as the forenoon had, and at five o'clock the party landed on the west bank of the river, a little way above the bridge, and, leaving Claude, Foster, and Tadpole to look after the boats, the rest of the party walked to the hotel, and sent down two teams for the boats and baggage.

CHAPTER XIX.

DEATH OF THE COINERS — HOME.

EVERYTHING came safely to the hotel, and, as the party all felt more or less tired, they went to bed early, and, as they did not intend to leave Edmundston until Monday, it was eight o'clock before they made their appearance in the dining-room Friday morning.

Friday was a raw, cloudy, disagreeable day, with an occasional snow squall, and they stopped in the hotel the most of the time, and talked with Tadpole, whom they had not discharged, about the river between Edmundston and Grand Falls, which was to be the end of their excursions by water.

"I suppose you are a good pilot on the river, Tadpole. Know it pretty well between here and Grand Falls?" questioned Claude.

"Guess so. Me been down um river hundred times. Know all shoal places — all bad places."

"What do you say, fellows, to having Tadpole go down as far as Grand Falls with us? We can run our boats through any water that his canoe will live in, and he can take the lead in bad water, and we can follow him," and Claude gazed around at his friends.

"That is a mighty good idea of yours, Claude," asserted St. Clair, "and, to tell you the truth, the same thing had occurred to me. I go in for it by all means."

The rest of the party expressed themselves in favor of it, and it was concluded to have the Indian accompany them to Grand Falls.

"How long will it take us to do it, Tadpole?" asked Maynard.

"Just as long as you like. Do him on pinch in one long day, or two, three, or four days. Think you like three days best. First day go to mouth of Green River. Second day to mouth of Grand River. Third day to Grand Falls. If have good weather, berry nice trip."

"All right! Take your word for it. I believe you are the only Indian that never told a lie," and Claude smiled and winked at Tadpole.

"Man be fool tell lie when truth do better," remarked the Indian, and the boys all laughed at Tadpole's philosophy.

Saturday was pleasant, and the boys passed the day outdoors; Sunday was the letter day, all of the party writing home, and telling their friends when they expected to return.

The programme laid down by the Indian was carried out, and the party had a very pleasant trip, arriving at Grand Falls Wednesday afternoon at five o'clock, and, going to the best hotel, registered and secured rooms, as they had decided to stop in the town the remainder of the week.

They had landed on the north bank of the river, above the falls, and as near as they dared go in their boats.

"I wonder if the boats will be safe here," remarked

Claude. "If so, we might leave them until Saturday, as we may wish to use them."

"Boats be all right," said Tadpole. "Nobody trouble them here."

"Then we will leave them," decided Claude.

A team was sent from the hotel to get everything but the boats, and after the boys received their things they changed their suits, as they had done "roughing it" for the trip.

That evening, the whole party, accompanied by Tadpole, walked down Broadway and across the suspension bridge, to take a view of the falls by night; but the moon was not large enough to give much light, and the view was not satisfactory.

Thursday they passed in exploring the Falls, and visiting the Wells, the Narrows, Pulpit Rock, Lovers' Leap, and all the other show places in the vicinity. They thoroughly enjoyed the day, and obtained a very good idea of this miniature Niagara.

Grand Falls are seventy-five feet high, and three hundred feet wide, and the volume of water that pours down the river is very large. Except in very dry summers, there is an unbroken sheet of water from one side to the other, and the views are well worth a visit to the town, at any time of year.

Friday forenoon the party, under the guidance of Tadpole, visited a hill near the town, from whose summit they had a fine view of the village, seven hundred feet below them, and of the "river basins," so called.

In the afternoon they started out for a walk, going up the river, and concluded to take a look at the boats

and see if they were all right, then continue on to a point that Tadpole had spoken of as presenting one of the finest views of the river to be had in the vicinity of the town.

When they came in sight of the boats, they were surprised to see that they were in the river, and that two men were just carrying Tadpole's canoe to the water.

"What in time those fellows doing wid our boats?" cried Tadpole, and the party quickened their footsteps, with the exception of Wingate.

"What are you up to there?" sang out Maynard.

"Let that canoe alone," called Claude.

The men were then at the edge of the river, and, as they heard Claude's voice, dropped the canoe roughly, and turned and looked upon the advancing party, who were now so near that their faces could be distinguished.

The next moment, to the surprise of the boys, the men spoke a few words to each other, and then pushed all three of the boats out into the river, and, jumping into the canoe, shoved away from the bank.

In their hurry, through carelessness, the canoe gave a lurch, and the smaller man of the two was thrown into the river; but he was hardly in the water before he struck out powerfully, and with a few strokes he was at the canoe and had hold of it.

The man in the canoe grabbed his unfortunate companion by the collar, and, after some difficulty, succeeded in getting him back into the ticklish craft without upsetting it. Then they both caught up a paddle, and began paddling for life, for during the

time lost in the accident the canoe had been drifting down river at a rapid rate.

As the men took their places for paddling, the party on shore caught a good view of their faces, and Claude and Wingate exclaimed at the same moment, "The Coiners!" while Tadpole cried out, "Dey'll never get ashore!"

"That was Bill and Jim, as sure as I live!" exclaimed Wingate. "They must have broken jail and come back here lately."

While watching and talking, the party were following along the river bank, which increased in height fast, until it became a precipitous wall of rock, towering up from the water for a hundred and fifty feet.

The coiners, for it was they in the canoe, had evidently recognized Claude's voice when he had called to them, which would account for their setting the boats adrift, also their speedy flight in the canoe, and the accident, which, according to Tadpole, was to cost them their lives.

"No hope for dem feners," said Tadpole, who had been watching the canoe like a lynx, "dey go over the falls sure."

"Why, that will be horrible!" exclaimed Wood.

"It will serve them right!" declared Wingate. "It is a more merciful death than they designed for Claude and me."

"While I would help rescue them if there was any possible way to do it, that justice might take its course," remarked Claude, "I shall not shed many tears for their tragic death. Their lives are forfeited to the law

any way, and, in one sense of the word, they are fortunate to change death on the gallows to death by drowning."

The boys had now to run to keep up with the canoe, which, in spite of the desperate efforts of the men, was carried by the powerful current straight toward the jaws of death.

Jim, who was the taller and more powerful of the two men, now made a last despairing strike for life. Standing up in the stern of the canoe, he plied the paddle with the frenzied strength of a giant.

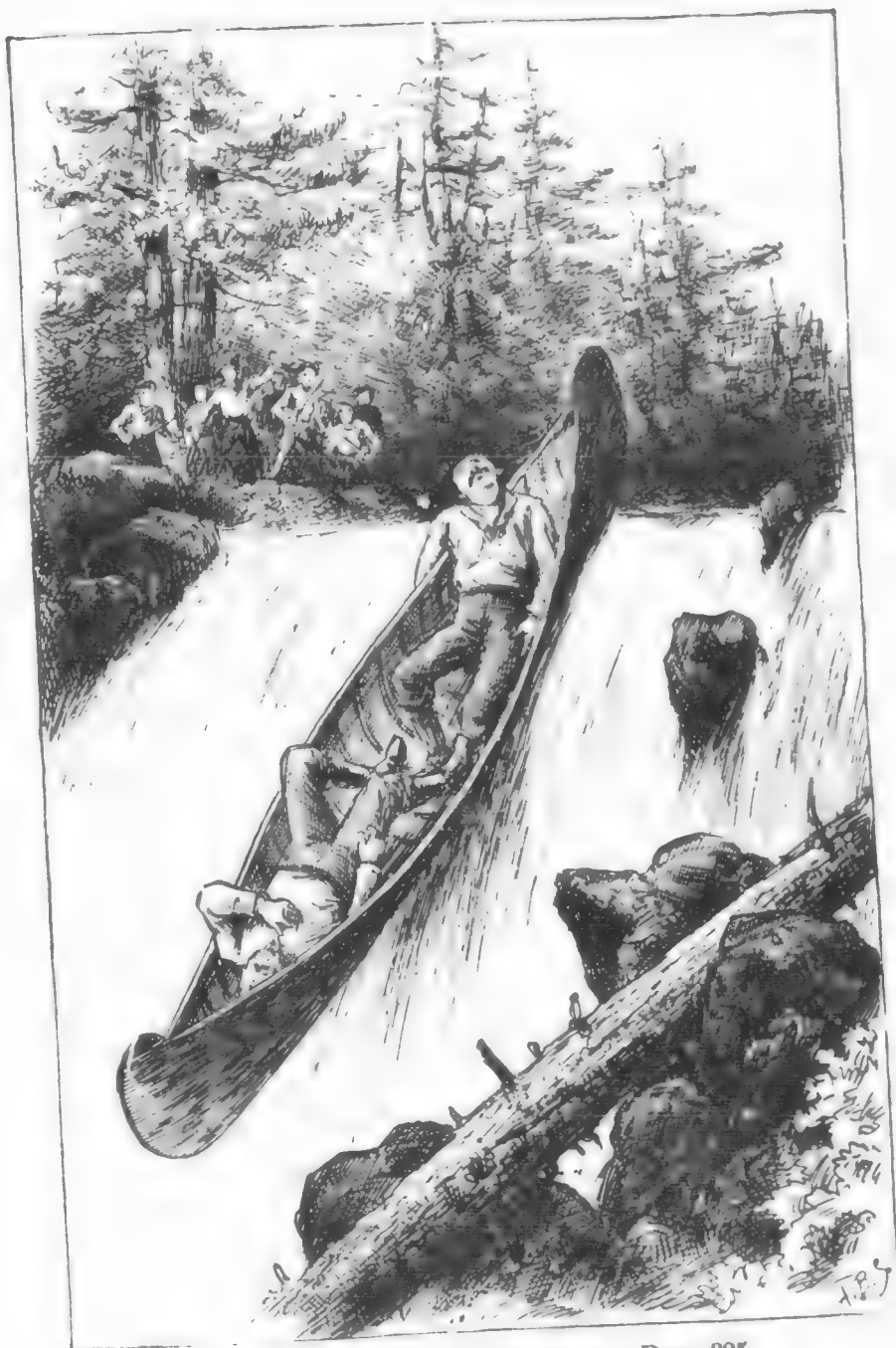
For a moment it seemed as if his almost superhuman efforts, coupled with those of Bill, who, although on his knees, was doing his best, would triumph. For the canoe was held against the current, and for a second or two began to creep up the river, and then the boys saw him suddenly pitch down into the centre of the canoe, which was swept rapidly toward the falls again.

"All up now, gone sure! Broke his paddle!" exclaimed Tadpole.

"There go our boats, fellows!" cried Claude, excitedly. And, looking at the crest of the fall, the party saw three bright objects hover for a second in the sunlight, and then disappear from sight.

"They are kindling-wood by this time," remarked St. Clair, with perfect coolness.

All eyes were now directed on the canoe and its occupants. When it reached a point within fifty yards of the brow of the cataract, both men were seen to raise something toward their heads, and the next moment they dropped down in the canoe.



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"Great Scott! they have shot themselves," cried Le Roy, turning pale.

"I don't blame them, 'Tom. I should have done the same thing had I been in their place, and had the means to do it with," declared Maynard.

And now, horrified and fascinated, the party, as if by mutual consent, came to a standstill, and watched the light craft, with lightning speed, sweep to the brink of the terrible abyss, and then disappear with its human freight.

"God have mercy on their souls!" ejaculated Claude.

"Amen!" added St. Clair, who was deeply affected by the sight he had witnessed, as were the whole party.

"You have seen the end of our enemies this time, Charlie, without doubt," remarked Claude.

"I suppose so," returned Wingate. "I told them I should live to see them hanged, but I made a slight mistake, for it seems the Lord meant they should be drowned."

"My canoe, he make um good hearse," said Tadpole, laughing.

For, having heard from Wingate the story of how the coiners had treated the boys on their trip down the West Branch, the Indian was rejoiced over the manner in which their enemies had met their death.

"I never wish to see such a sight again," said Wood, who was trembling from the effects of the shock to his nervous system. "It was horrible!" and he put his hands to his eyes, as if to shut out the awful memory.

"Brace up, Dave," commanded Maynard. "It does seem something terrible to be an eye-witness to such a tragedy. But remember these men were murderers, fleeing from the law, and, although they escaped the hands of man, they could not escape the hand of God."

"Well," remarked Claude, drawing a long breath, "I suppose we ought to go back to town, and relate what we have seen, to the proper authorities, for, undoubtedly, American officers will be here in a few days, searching after these men."

"That seems to me the proper thing to be done," added Foster.

"Suppose we go down to the bridge first, and see if we can see anything of the boats or canoe, and find out if anybody witnessed the accident beside ourselves," proposed Maynard.

"I go in for that," agreed St. Clair. "All we can do about witnessing their death is to go before a magistrate, and make a deposition to that effect, and we can do that to-morrow as well as to-day."

"That is so," replied Wingate.

The party now went out to the main street, and started for the bridge. Before they reached it, however, it was evident that they were not the only ones who had seen the accident, as a large number of people were hurrying toward the bridge.

The boys walked to the middle of the bridge, where they found a crowd of excited people, who were talking in French and English, and peering into the river, first on one side, and then the other. Among the crowd

was the landlord, who, the moment he saw them, rushed up to the party, and, shaking hands with Claude, exclaimed:—

“You are alive, then? Are all your party safe?”

“I should say we were. Don't you see the fellows all around you, and Tadpole besides?”

“I was so shocked,” added the landlord, “I shall not get over it for a month. A short time ago, a man rushed into the house, and told me that you had all been carried over the falls. He had seen your boats and the canoe go over the cataract while he was crossing the bridge.”

“I am happy to say that we were not in them,” returned Claude, and then he began a narration of the facts connected with the accident, and everybody who could understand English crowded around to hear the story.

After Claude had explained the matter to his landlord's satisfaction, the party left the bridge and followed around the cliffs along the river, looking carefully to see if they could find any trace of the boats or canoe, but not a vestige of them was discovered. They went almost to the railroad, and then walked to the station, and from there to the hotel.

“Do you suppose those bodies will ever be found, Claude?” inquired Drake, as they walked back.

“No. You might as well look for a needle in a haystack. And, then, I don't know of anybody who would have enough interest in them to go to the expense of making a search.”

“I doubt if they are ever seen again,” added May-

nard. "If they were found along here, the town authorities would have to bury them, and they will not take any unnecessary trouble in the matter, I'll be bound. I don't see why they should, either. The men are dead, and their remains may as well be buried in the river as anywhere else."

"Poison de fish," put in Tadpole, dryly.

"Don't be vindictive, Tadpole," remarked Claude, who, with his friends, could not repress a smile at the Indian's speech.

When the party reached their hotel, they found it full of curious people, who began to interview them with a freedom that would have done credit to a daily newspaper reporter, and, to escape this throng, who were all strangers to them, the boys adjourned to Claude's room, where they stopped till supper time.

After t' meal was over, the party went into the ladies' parlor, where they could avoid the crowd, and passed a delightful evening, with music and singing.

"Talk about a Yankee's curiosity," remarked Wood, during one of the intervals between the singing. "If these Canucks cannot discount any Yankee on curiosity that I ever saw, then I am a newspaper reporter."

"Which is equivalent to being a liar," added Drake, laughing.

"Exactly."

While at breakfast the next morning, the landlord came to the table where the boys were eating, and told them they would have to go to a magistrate's office that morning, and tell what they knew about the acci-

dent, and added that a policeman was then in the hotel, waiting to talk with them.

"This is a nuisance," remarked Claude. "We don't care to spend the whole day in repeating a story that we have already worn threadbare, and I don't see by what right the magistrate summons us."

"The policeman has a letter for you," added the landlord.

"Trot it in here, then," said Maynard. "and let's see what he has to say."

The landlord went out and obtained the letter, and brought it to Claude, who read it aloud.

It was not written in an official capacity, but the magistrate said that he understood the men who had been drowned were fugitives from justice, and, if American officers visited the town in connection with the case, he would like to be able to give them what information he could, and he personally knew nothing of the matter, except from the rumors that had spread through the place, and if one or more of the party could find it convenient to call at his office, at ten o'clock Saturday, he would be pleased to meet them.

"The fellow is a gentleman, at all events," remarked Claude, "and, since he puts the matter in the way he has, it would hardly be polite of us not to go. What do you think, fellows?"

"You are right, Claude. I think we had better go, and we can take our walk up river this afternoon," replied Maynard, and the other members of the party agreed with Maynard.

"Tell the cop we will come," said Claude.

"The cop?" inquired the landlord.

"Yes, the cop. Or the peeler, if you prefer that name."

"Peeler?" repeated their host, doubtfully.

"Policeman, then — if you can't understand plain English," explained Claude, with a laugh, in which all the boys joined.

"I see," said the landlord, as he left the party to finish their breakfast.

In keeping with their promise, the boys went to the magistrate's office at the hour appointed, and found the official a very pleasant gentleman.

A crowd had followed the party, suspecting something unusual was going on, and they did not hesitate to crowd into the office, close behind the boys.

The first thing the magistrate did was to turn everybody but the boys and his clerk out of the office, an act which raised him high in the opinion of the party. After the door had been locked, the gentleman stated in a pleasant manner what he wanted, and the boys gave him all the information they possessed, the clerk taking it down in shorthand. They were then asked to swear to the statement, which they did, and then they had a pleasant chat with the gentleman, whom they found to be an enthusiastic sportsman, and an hour or more slipped rapidly by in social converse, the majority of the boys being surprised when Wingate asked them if they knew it was one o'clock, and added that it was time for them to go to dinner.

The magistrate shook hands with them all around when they were ready to leave, and invited them to

come to Grand Falls the next summer, and he would take them to a salmon stream he leased, where they might have a chance to battle with the gamiest fish in fresh waters.

The boys thanked him, and Claude invited him to the dinner with them Sunday; but he refused, on the plea of going out of town that afternoon.

"If I were at home to-morrow, nothing would give me greater pleasure," he added, as the boys bade him adieu.

That afternoon they took the walk up the river that they had been interrupted in by the loss of their boats, and Tadpole related several interesting legends connected with the Indians' occupancy of the country years before.

Sunday, the boys attended service at the Episcopal church in the morning, and in the afternoon took another long walk down the river.

Monday morning they settled up with the Indian, and, beside paying him for his time and canoe, made him a present of ten dollars, for they had all enjoyed his society.

Tadpole was sorry to part with them, for they seemed like friends to him, and he begged them, if they ever intended visiting the country again, to write to him, and he would go with them, no matter where they were bound. He gave Wingate two bottles of medicine, one for external and the other for internal use, with directions.

The Indian accompanied them to the depot, and shook hands before the train started, and then watched the cars until they were out of sight.

The party went down to Vanceborough by the New Brunswick Railway, and then to Bangor by the Maine Central, and from the Queen City of the East they took passage on one of the Bangor steamers, for reasons best known to a few of the party, arriving safely in Boston, after an absence of nearly four months, during which time they had travelled almost fourteen hundred miles, five hundred of which had been entirely through the wilderness.

Soon after their arrival home, there was an interesting meeting of the Lake and Forest Club, at which the boys, with the exception of Robbins and Foster, who had returned to their respective homes, related their summer adventures.

Before Robbins left, he had obtained a promise from Claude that, the next trip the club made, they would visit him in Florida, and the next volume in this series will be entitled, "SOUTHWARD BOUND ; OR, CAMP LIFE IN FLORIDA."

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